

Message from the President

Gold Buckle Futurity

The Board has recently made changes to the GBF which over the past week, we have personally conveyed to the Nominators of horses involved.

Put simply, the GBF will now be for 4-year-old horses to be shown one handed in a bridle. The first of these 4-year-old events will be for those horses born after 1 August 2016 and will be held at the RA National show in 2021.

RA is aware of the enormous amount of time, effort and cost involved in preparing a Reining Horse for a show career and therefore will also run a separate 3 year old Snaffle Bit Futurity for Open and Non-Pro Horses at each National Show. These Snaffle Bit Futurities will not form part of the GBF and therefore be open to all horses, not just those nominated for the GBF program. This change will mean a lot less pressure on these 3-year-old horses given they will be shown two handed in a Snaffle Bit and not one handed in a bridle.

Whilst these changes have been prompted by the shutdown of horse shows caused by the Covid-19 Virus, the Board feels they were inevitable and in many ways are vital to the survival of our sport. The fact that the current Futurity Horses are facing a "forced lay-over" due to the Virus has provided a perfect opportunity to move to the 4-year-old Futurity concept.

If we take a good look at the world today, there is no doubt it is vastly different to that which a lot of us were living in when we started riding and showing horses. Public scrutiny of how we look after our Horses has never been greater. Private ownership of horses and the riding of them is even being questioned by those who do not understand what we do and why we do it. Animal welfare groups are constantly making headlines with such activities as picketing farms and even stealing Farm animals to make their point of perceived animal cruelty. Even risking Jail in doing so, thus proving their resolve.

Our small industry cannot ignore the groundswell of opinion happening in our Country and all around the world and expect to survive.

Just look at what has happened and is happening in our Country in recent times:

- The whole Greyhound Racing industry shutdown in NSW after the Government was lobbied by animal cruelty activists. The Government did this even in the face of losing millions of dollars in gambling revenue.
- The most powerful Equine Industry in Australia, Thoroughbred Racing, put under the spotlight for ex-racehorses being sent to abattoirs when no longer a viable racing proposition. This has resulted in no Thoroughbred in NSW being allowed to be sold at a public horse sale and the Racing industry spending millions of dollars in re-homing programs.
- The Paint Horse Association of Australia has recently moved to have NO ridden 2 year old classes at Future National Shows. In years gone by, the 2 year old Pleasure Futurity was the biggest Event at the Paint Nationals.
- The AQHA have moved that a 2 year old can only be ridden in a maximum of three classes at any given show and there is a big push for them to go the way of the Paints and have no 2 year old ridden classes at all.
- The National Pleasure Horse Association's 2 year old Futurity numbers have decreased dramatically over recent years.

The ever-increasing push for less pressure on young show horses is being seen around the world and recognized by the FEI some time ago. We know that they have voiced their concerns with NRHA around the US Futurity putting too much pressure on young horses. The European Reining Futurity has been for 4yolds for a number of years now. This has eventuated not because they have more horses, richer owners and far greater prizemoney and therefore can afford to do so, but no doubt because of the strong FEI presence and influence in Europe.

We might ask "where will this all end" and unfortunately no one really has the answer. It doesn't really matter if we believe what we are doing with our younger horses is OK. It is all about public perception, the generally un-informed members of the public can make or break us. We therefore need to be aware of where public opinion is placed. When we have so-called Celebrity Veterinarians going on national Television and making statements like "I don't understand why people need to ride horses", we know that the fight for our rights as animal owners and Horse riders is far from over. We have a choice, either be across all of these issues and be seen to be pro-active, or get run over and left to wither and die. There is no doubt change is inevitable. Do we embrace it and have control over change or do we just let it happen with no input whatsoever? Seems a fairly simple answer and the Board believes that the appropriate time to act is NOW!

The changes the Board has made to the GBF were not taken lightly and we thank the nominators of the horses currently affected by these changes for their patience and acceptance. We were buoyed by the fact that over 90% of those nominators whole-heartedly supported our decision. We look forward to everyone's continued support and patronage of the GBF to make it the best it can be.

Going forward, we have no doubt that more changes and even concessions may need to be made by future Boards to keep Reining alive and well in Australia. We will survive and prosper as long as we stick together, remember **Unity is the key**. We are confident that all members will continue to support these tough decisions as long as we remember why we all do this..... **we all love REINING!!**

Kindest Regards,

Warren.