

# THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE'S LEADING STUD FARMS



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## THE VIEW DOWNUNDER ~ HAROLD HOWE

# SOBERING PROPOSALS IN AUSTRALIA

Far reaching changes for the Australian breeding industry have been introduced which, if implemented, could have significant impact on the shuttle stallion business and the way Downunder nurseries operate.

**M**uch has been made in recent weeks of the Jeff Gural initiated proposal on stallion eligibility. After great behind the scenes debate it has all been deferred for more study in 2012.

It did cause quite a kerfuffle within the industry but is nothing compared to what is being debated in Australia at the moment and it all stems from a report on the Australian breeding industry by a group called the Australian Standardbred Breeding Panel. That report may be read by [clicking here](#).

The reports calls for unprecedented changes which it says are necessary to stop the steady downward reduction in horses being bred and the flight of people away from the industry. If implemented, the program will have significant

impact on New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

Heading the panel is chair John Bagshaw, a longtime participant in not only the Australian racing industry but in Canada where he raced horses with Dr. John Hayes for a number of years. His group received survey input from a wide cross-section of participants in the six Australian states.

In the interest of brevity we'll just touch on the highlights beginning with the 2006/2007 breeding season that saw a dip of approximately 1,000 foals largely due to the Equine Influenza episode in that country. Today the active broodmare population is just over 12,000 mares in the country but on average only 7,800 are bred and interestingly, the vast majority of breeders are hobbyists with less than

five mares. There are 6,000 individuals recognized as breeders.

The thrust of the findings and the recommendations could easily be construed as protectionist. Australia is a country long known for its socialist policies which are much stronger than in Canada for example. The trade unions have retained great influence in that country of 21 million.

So it is not surprising to read that "the majority of breeders/owners are calling for more racing opportunities and prize money at the bottom end, even if it comes from the top."

But it is the major stud farms who will be hit the hardest if the recommendations are implemented. These include significant stallion registration fees as follows:



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1. Setting annual stallion registration fees equal to the advertised service fee set by the stallion owner or stud. That stallion fee only entitles the stallion to breed up to 50 mares that produce 42 day positive test.

2. After 50 mares the stallion owner or stud must pay an additional three per cent of their service fee for mares between 51 and 100, four per cent between 101 and 150, five per cent between 151 and 200 and six per cent for more than 201 positive tests in a season.

3. Stallions providing less than 51 services via frozen semen will pay a \$500 plus an additional \$500 for each 42 day positive test.

4. Imported semen foal registration fee would be established at a rate of \$500 for colts and \$250 for fillies (approximately 15 per cent of Australia's foals are the result of imported, chilled or frozen semen).

5. The Panel would like to encourage extended payment options for service fees.

**Stallion shuttling from Canada and the United States will be affected tremendously if the proposals being suggested are implemented.**

As one would expect this has the people involved with shuttle stallions in an uproar. It has been suggested that much of this is an anti-North American mentality despite the fact that in most cases the shuttle stallions are financially backed by Australians.

Having purchased the Southern Hemisphere rights they have in effect "rented" the stallions for the breeding season in an effort to get a return on the monies they paid to North American owners and farms.

One Australian farm said that if this comes into place it would cost them an additional \$175,000 to operate. Discounted stud fees are very common in Australia (and New Zealand) and if this came into place that practice would be eliminated along with sponsorship

monies within racing. It is argued that this would cost the hobby breeder more at the end of the day.

The panel has enraged the New Zealand Standardbred industry with the proposal for stiff import fees. Approximately 600 Standardbred horses are imported to Australia, mostly from New Zealand. Rightly or wrongly, there is the perception that New Zealand bred horses are superior. Regardless, the Aussie market is very important to the New Zealand game.

It was suggested that a \$5,000 tariff be applied to male horses that were permanently imported to Australia (since modified to \$2,000). The New Zealand Standardbred Breeders Association has replied that it believes this all is a breach of a 30-year-old Closer Economic Relations Treaty that the two countries have.

Harness Racing Australia has retorted that its legal advice says that this is not the case.

The proposal goes on to recommend that a National Mares Credit Scheme be created. This would be in the interest of stimulating greater racing for fillies and mares.

Rewards would be accrued by way of a dollar value credit when a filly or mare first races, each time it races and when it wins a race as a two, three or four-year-old. The credit would be retained by the horse, not the owner and could be only used for the purpose of purchasing services of Australian based stallions.

The panel wants to see an Industry Loyalty/Membership Program started to create and coordinate discounted service fees and other benefits.

It wants to see the yearling sales delayed by eight to 12 weeks from the current practice. At present the yearling sales commence when many yearlings are 13 months old through 16 months of age.

It wants to create a centralized breeding administration in the interest of efficiency. A much more advanced industry website is called for that will provide price competition comparison among service providers including breeding farm service fees.


It calls for real time breeding data from the stud farms which puts the spotlight on the farms to report on stallion fertility on a daily basis.

And there is more which can be gleaned from viewing the full document but safe to say this report is contentious. If it is to

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be implemented remains to be seen. But it is far reaching and far beyond anything being considered in North America particularly the United States, the home of free enterprise. From the perspective of a stallion owner half a world away, this makes doing business in Australia less than appealing.

The report has been referred to another body other than Harness Racing Australia for further consideration. 📄




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Photos by Ann MacNeill



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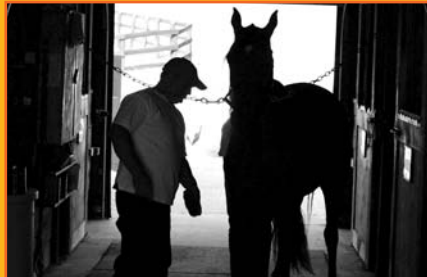
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2,1:57.4; 3,1:54 (\$1,495,295)  
American Winner-Lawn Tennis  
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## ART MAJOR



p,2,1:54.3f; 3,1:50.1s; 4,1:48.4  
(\$2,727,224)  
Artsplace-Perfect Profile by Nihilator  
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## ROCK N ROLL HEAVEN



p,2,1:50.2; 3,1:47.3 (\$2,748,818)  
Rocknroll Hanover-Artistic Vision  
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## CRAZED



2,Q1:57; 3,1:52.2-1:53.2f  
(\$1,063,059)  
Credit Winner-Mary Lou Hall  
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p,2,1:53.1; 3,1:48.2-'11 (\$1,805,102)  
Cam's Card Shark - Classic Wish  
by Ambro Emerson  
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p,2,1:57.2; 3,1:48.2f-1:50h; 4,1:47.4  
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