

Horserace Betting Levy Board

An Impact Report
March 2026



Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme Overview



- Project:** Education Programme*
 - Number of Grants:** 4
 - Period:** 2022-2025
 - Total project funding to date:** £363,000
 - Location:** National
- *HBLB also funds other RoR projects, not included in this report.

GRANT OVERVIEW

Retraining of Racehorses (RoR) provides practical advice, dedicated support and a national safety net for former racehorses in need.

Since 2022, HBLB has awarded four restricted grants specifically to support RoR's Education Programme, enabling owners to access the knowledge and resources required to transition their horses safely from racing into new careers.

YEAR	AMOUNT
2022	£60,000
2023	£72,000
2024	£126,000
2025	£105,000

ABOUT RETRAINING OF RACHORSES

MISSION

To safeguard the wellbeing of all former racehorses

RoR provides central oversight for aftercare in Great Britain. Historically, the aftercare landscape was fragmented, with several organisations undertaking valuable work but without coordination. In recent years, RoR has taken on a strategic leadership role, coordinating good practice, acting as a conduit for funding, and delivering some services directly.

While racehorses are bred for racing, their careers are short relative to their life expectancy. Most of their lives are spent beyond the track, requiring retraining to transition from the high-intensity, tightly structured racing environment to a slower, more varied second career.

The rehoming of former racehorses poses challenges, particularly when athletic, sensitive horses are matched with owners who have no experience in retraining.

Timely support helps owners address challenges early, preventing further rehoming, welfare crises, or entry into the Vulnerable Horse Scheme.

Retraining of Racehorses exists to ensure a lifetime of well-being for a former racehorse.

ABOUT THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

RoR's education programmes support the racing community and prospective owners to build the knowledge and confidence needed to take on former racehorses. By providing practical guidance on retraining and management, the programmes help horses transition into informed and secure second homes.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES



HOW THE PROGRAMME HAS CHANGED WITH HBLB FUNDING



Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme

The Need



KEY CHALLENGES FOR A FORMER RACEHORSE

2,500

Horses retire annually from British horseracing industry

5 - 7 years

Average age of **Flat racehorse** at retirement

10 - 12+ years

Average age of **Jump racehorse** at retirement

25 - 28 years

Flat and Jump Racehorse average life expectancy

This leaves around 10-20 years of post-racing life requiring responsible care and purpose.

SECURING PURPOSE

Without a clear second career, horses face a greater risk of unstable ownership or neglect. While Thoroughbreds are versatile, each will have individual temperament, skills, and abilities. Finding the right new role for the horse is essential for long-term welfare.

COST-OF-LIVING

Rising equestrian costs are putting greater strain on owners. In 2025, UK hay prices doubled to £130–£350 per tonne, contributing to broader welfare concerns [6].

Per tonne, a large bale of hay costs:

£73 in December 2024



£131 in January 2026



RETRAINING COMPLEXITY

Moving from elite racing to a second career requires careful management. A peer-reviewed study of more than 1,100 retired Thoroughbreds in Australia found that, compared with non-racehorse controls, during their first year of new ownership, ex- racehorses were [7]:

x 4

more likely to experience musculoskeletal injuries

x 3

more likely to develop foot or hoof problems

x 2

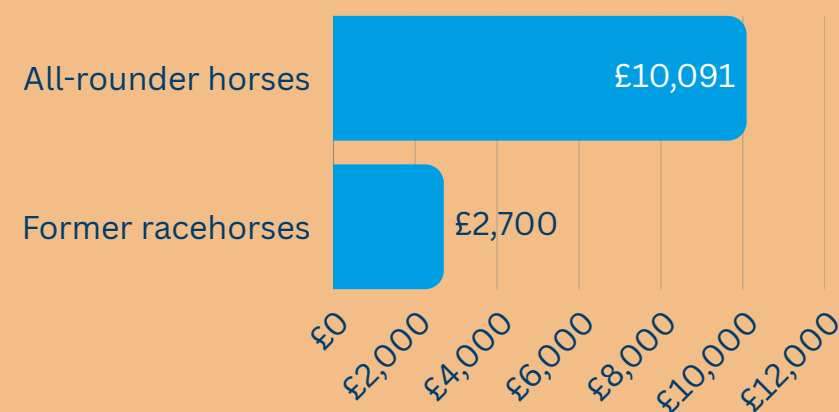
as likely to experience behavioural issues

x 2

as likely to suffer gastrointestinal disease

COMPETITIVE PRICES

Average Price of Online Horse sales [5]



Former racehorses are comparatively more affordable to buy (~£2,700 on average), but ongoing care can be higher due to specialist feed, farriery and veterinary needs. Ensuring owners understand these costs is key

EDUCATION PROGRAMME - GOALS & NEED

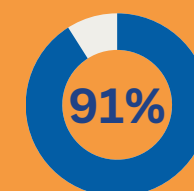


PREVENTING HORSE VULNERABILITY

Providing support and guidance to new, former racehorse owners is preventative, aiming to reduce the number of horses requiring entry into RoR's Vulnerable Horse Scheme or other forms of charitable intervention. Recurring themes include poor basic management (feet, condition), which are entirely preventable through education.

69

Horses entered RoR's **Vulnerable Horse Scheme** in 2025

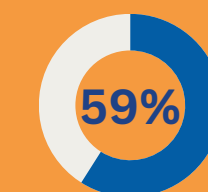


of new RoR members **joined specifically for educational support**, signalling demand



UPSKILLING THE COMMUNITY

Building owners' confidence and skills to retrain former racehorses for leisure or competition—alongside CPD for coaches, vets, physiotherapists, farriers, and MSK practitioners — expands the pool of relevant expertise.



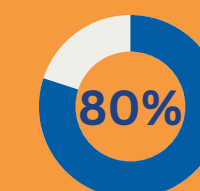
of horses entering the Vulnerable Horse Scheme are relinquished due to an owner's **knowledge gaps** or **inability to cope**

"Retraining and Repurposing" is repeatedly noted as the **#1** area owners need help with, according to feedback from new member surveys



STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Data often becomes fragmented when horses move into private leisure ownership, fuelling mistrust and weakening accountability. Each clinic, webinar, and event creates a data touchpoint that encourages owners to register with RoR, helping the industry build the evidence needed to demonstrate accountability to regulators.



of **former racehorses** are **traceable**, according to the 2023 Thoroughbred Census [8]

Untracked former racehorses may face neglect, abandonment, multiple rehoming or even slaughter

Retraining of Racehorses, Education Programme Outcomes and Impact



2025 IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Preventing Horse Vulnerability

121

horses were supported through RoR's welfare safety net in 2025



Strengthening Traceability

1,685

new horses were registered during 2025

15,446

former racehorses registered in total



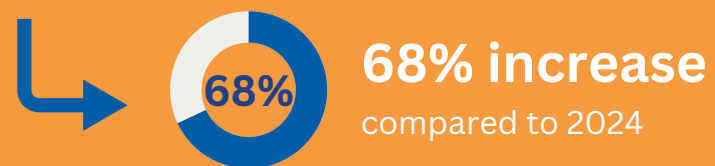
Upskilling Community

264

educational events were delivered in 2025

2,808

participants attended educational activity



“I am a new member to RoR, but because of the team of people at the camp, there is no doubt I will be doing more and more with my racehorse and the RoR. Thank you for the opportunity of the camp.”

“My mother-in-law, my daughter, and I very much enjoyed the Realistic Retraining event. It was always good to see how we are doing compared to other ex-racers, as re-training can be a very slow process as the horses adjust to becoming riding horses. Thank you to all who organised and participated in the event.”

“So looking forward to achieving more with my fabulous ex-racer, with your help, support & advice. Never felt so welcome at events, being with people who understand the Thoroughbred, enabling us to give them the very best they truly deserve.”

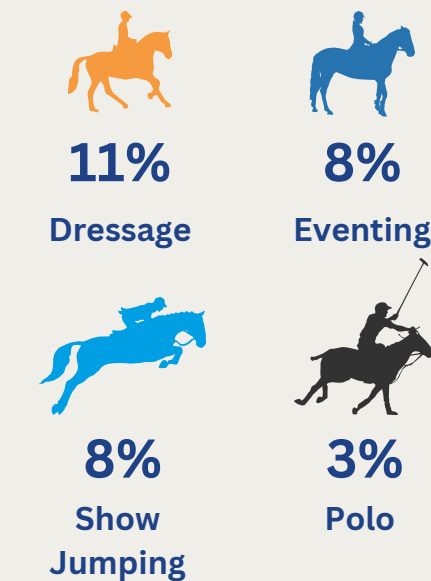


COMPOUNDING IMPACT POTENTIAL

Protecting the Industry

Education and effective retraining pathways demonstrate racing's commitment to lifetime responsibility. As successful second careers become more visible, welfare risks decline, and public confidence grows- strengthening the sport's long-term legitimacy and social licence to operate.

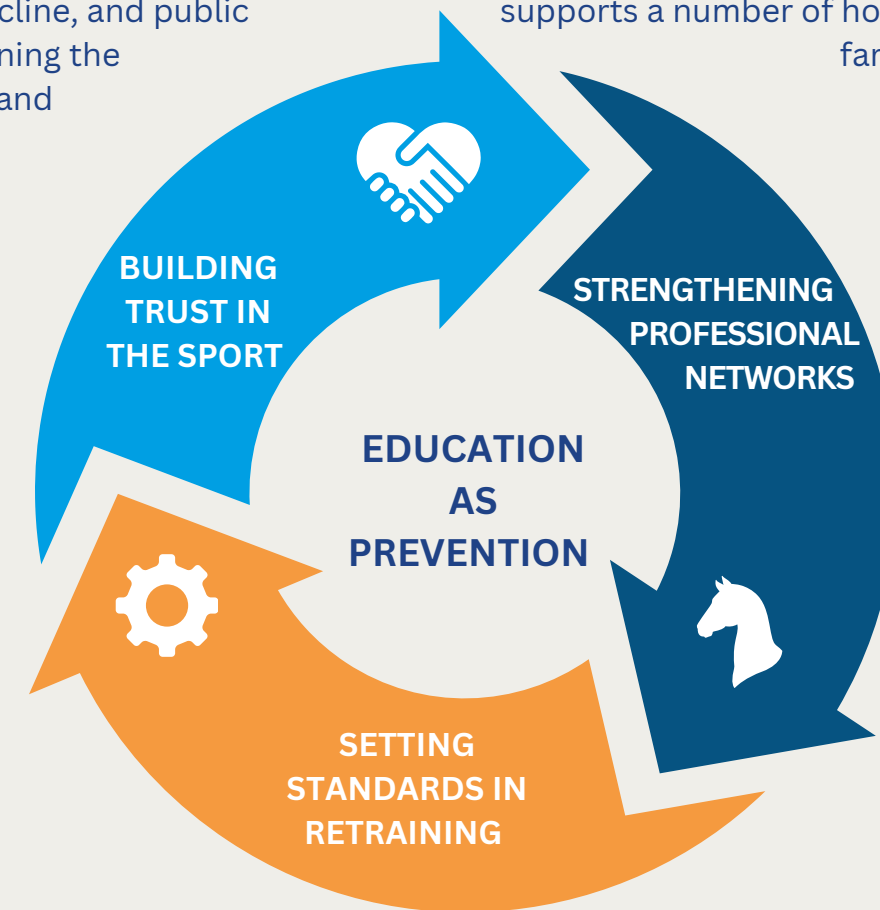
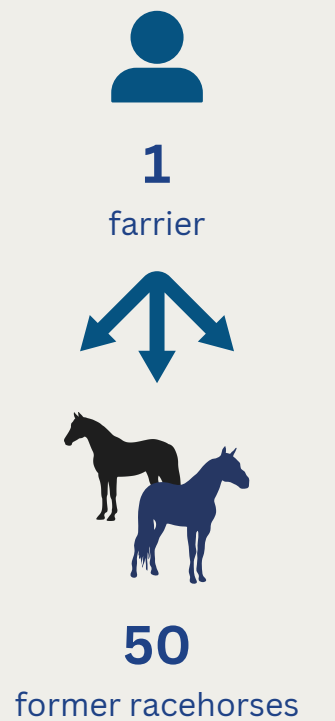
Retrained racehorses can successfully transition into a number of second careers, additionally benefiting other equine sports [8]:



Expanding Thoroughbred Expertise

By equipping vets, farriers, and coaches with Thoroughbred-specific expertise, specialist knowledge is spread across the sector. As each professional supports a number of horses, improved care can reach far more former racehorses than the training alone.

Multiplier Effect:



Raising Sector Standards

Education sets clearer expectations for responsible retraining. The Retrainer Approval Scheme signals trusted welfare and training standards, guiding owners towards qualified support. Engagement with equine colleges and youth organisations embeds these practices early, creating a compounding effect as better standards are passed on to future riders, future owners and professionals.



Horserace Betting Levy Board

The Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) is a UK statutory body that was established by the Betting Levy Act 1961. It operates in accordance with the provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (as amended). It is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), and its sponsoring Government department is the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.



<http://hblb.org.uk>

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Sources:

[1] British Racecourses, “British Racecourses Directory”, <https://www.britishracecourses.org/>.

[2] Voconiq, National Survey of UK Citizen Attitudes Towards UK Equestrian Sport Industries, commissioned by World Horse Welfare and British Equestrian, 2024.

[3] British Equestrian, “Horses for All: Report Summary and Response”, April 2023, https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/assets/EXTRA_Docs/HorsesForAll_report_summary_and_response_FINAL_05.04.23.pdf.

[4] British Horseracing Authority (BHA), “Project Beacon Research”, September 2025.

[5] Whickr, “The Price of Horses for Sale Online”, <https://www.whickr.com/uk/en/blog/the-price-of-horses-for-sale-online/>.

[6] BBC News, “Horse welfare concerns and industry response”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9yz4j52n2o>.

[7] Hitchens, P.L., Morrice-West, A.V., Stevenson, M.A. & Whitton, R.C., “Thoroughbred Use, Health and Owner Satisfaction Following Retirement from Racing in Australia”, Australian Veterinary Journal, Vol. 97, No. 8, 2019, pp. 271–280.

[8] Horse Welfare Board and Hartpury University, “Thoroughbred Census: Versatility of Former Racehorses”, <https://horsepwr.co.uk/news/intelligence-shows-versatility-of-former-racehorses>.

