

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STANDARDBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION Inc.
(WASBA)

53RD Annual General Meeting Friday 25 November 2022

President's Report

Welcome

Welcome to the 53RD Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Western Australian Standardbred Breeders Association (WASBA). We have been in existence as WASBA since the 70s, but our creation was actually in 1946, three quarters of a century ago. We want to make the next 25 years meaningful to harness racing in Western Australia.

I would like to start by concentrating on some of our achievements.

Achievements

We continue to push for the changes that we believe will make a difference to breeders, which makes a difference to harness racing in WA and our industry overall, although I would have to say it isn't without difficulty:

- **Westbred Bonus:** We are exceptionally pleased that some of the remaining components of the Westbred Review received the necessary support from RWWAs Charlotte Mills, before her departure, and David Hunter and saw the light of day. Starting in 2023 a First Start Bonus will be payable to Westbred 2yos, and their connections will also receive an increased Westbred Bonus – a 3 tier system that provides \$7,500 Westbred Bonus for metropolitan racing and \$5,000 for country except community level. The double Westsired Win Bonus continues. Naturally we would have preferred all race levels were eligible for the increases but this is still a good outcome. The First Start Bonus will hopefully see more juveniles make it to the track and having got there, who knows what opportunities lie ahead after that.
- **Epona Bonus:** As part of the suite of changes, the Epona Bonus has doubled to \$10,000, commencing with wins by fillies or mares from 1 January 2023. This was the second of the 3 major improvements that WASBA has been lobbying RWWA for over a long period of time. Both of these initiatives had great support from our Harness Code Director Bob Fowler, who was reappointed to a 2 year term on the RWWA Board commencing July 2022.
- **Stakes percentages:** We had success last year in increasing payments to last to a minimum of \$150 across the board. This year, along with WACHRA and WABOTRA we did seek a greater distribution to second and third placed horses to coincide with the general stakes increase, such that the winner also received an increase. While the end result wasn't quite what we had hoped, it was still an improvement on the previous 5 years and certainly saw some bigger distribution to second to fourth in feature races, something that many have requested over a number of years. It was disappointing that RWWA chose to ignore what was a majority vote of the Eligible Bodies, with no adverse impact on RWWA if they went with the majority view.
- **Off The Track/ rehoming sponsorship:** We were excited to produce new forms of sponsorship in the form of subsidised entry for SPPHAWA members to selected shows. We hope that over the next few years this will support SPPHAWA – who provide significant opportunities to our off the track Standardbreds – and at the same time create a much greater focus for horse owners to select a Standardbred as their next best mate. The more we can demonstrate what capacities our horses have, the more we encourage their opportunities for life after racing. WASBA also provided sponsorship to other events involving Standardbreds and were involved with liaison with the Royal Agricultural Society Show organisers who included Standardbreds as one of the feature events this year.

Although it only occurred in November this year, WASBA along with RWWA re-trainer Bayley Thomas and with great support from The Trots WA's Sian Hughes as the RWWA liaison with Off The Track WA, did undertake a WA Derby Off The Track display on Derby night. This event was attempted in 2021 but did not receive the interest from RWWA that we were able to engender this year, as well as Covid eventually causing the concept to be abandoned.

This year's event was an extremely positive experience for all concerned. Many previous owners and trainers made the effort to see their former horses and talk to their new owners.

I believe that this should be an ongoing, essential component of our racing system, to bridge the gap between on and off the track. These horses and their owners remain part of our future and are essential if we are to grow. We have made it clear though, that RWWA should be providing the impetus and working with clubs to action this.

- **Monthly News.** We have continued our Monthly Newsletter as a service to our membership. We have added a section on international racing, particularly items of interest for WA raced horses, future stallion prospects and mares that might impact the future of the industry.
- **Awards:** We continue to support breeders through our Annual Awards, presented at the 2022 APG WASBA combined function. There were a Award recipients include breeders of the leading 2yos and 3yos for each sex, leading mare and leading aged horse, leading breeder, leading WA based stallion for each age and Breeders of the Month. The trophies provided are the equal of the RWWA Annual Award trophies. Our sponsors APG and Decron also provided \$1,000 to the Breeders of Open Group 1 winning horses meeting certain conditions. WASBA provides all the Awards and make a significant financial contribution to the running of the event.
- **Rewards and Presentations:** We remain committed to delivering a better product for owners and breeders through our sponsored races, providing a combination of rugs, trophies and garlands for various events:
 - rug, garland and trophy for the \$30,000 WASBA Country Oaks. WASBA has requested RWWA increase the stakes for this race to the same as the Country Derby and we are certainly pleased that this has occurred;
 - Winning sashes for the Westsired Finals;
 - trophies for the \$30,000 4/5YO Harry Capararo Westbred Mares, 4/5YO Kerry Clarke Westbred and WASBA 4/5YO Mares, all races created by WASBA. From 2023 the Kerry Clarke will be replaced by a Westbred 4/5YO Restricted Classic;
 - A trophy for the \$30,000 Laurie Kennedy Race For Roses. In a good but also poignant outcome, the Laurie Kennedy will in 2023 become a separate Group 3 \$50,000 Open Fillies and Mares Pace, as will the Kerry Clarke. We are certainly pleased that these races will retain their Group 3 status under the new HRA Group rules, a great honour for their namesakes. Responsibility for trophies now falls on Gloucester Park Harness Racing;
 - \$1,500 in incentives for the Busselton Sweetheart Series;
 - Subsidised stakes to \$14,000, as well as rugs, garlands and trophies, for the WASBA created WASBA Bob Humphries Memorial at Bunbury, WASBA King-Lethbridge at Pinjarra and WASBA Virgil Queen Celebration at Northam;
 - Provided \$500 in service fee vouchers to members who had either purchased tickets in the WASBA Raffle or participated in the WASBA Stallion Tender.

We appreciate the support we have received from Gloucester Park, Bunbury, Northam, Busselton and Pinjarra clubs to continue our support for the industry.

All in all, WASBA provides over \$22,000 per year in direct support to the industry.

Current Status




Nationally, there have been some divisive changes that have impacted on WA harness racing as per listed below. There are still matters we will continue to pursue, but other decisions just need to be taken on the chin and move on. The impact of some of the decisions are yet to be felt on the racetrack.

Whether you agree with the changes or not, it's important that the industry can continue to provide breeders with sufficient incentives - financial or other - to continue to breed and provide for the future of our industry. We will continue to consult with our breeders, review outcomes and put forward recommendations and feedback that best fits our WA industry:

- Stallion Book limits have resulted in the top layer of stallion, in terms of popularity, being booked out well before the season commences, with commercial sellers taking the bulk of services. While expected, this was always going to be one of the challenges as to whether studs started to pick and choose what they considered were suitable mares. It has impacted breeder decisions, especially if the breeder has lost a mare or the mare is now considered too old, as the free return is now prevented by HRA Rules. Many breeders are choosing to wait a year rather than make a decision that they believe is not in their best interest.
- ⌚ It is still our desire to change to stallion cap to be exclusive of free returns. It's simpler and fairer and we will not lose sight of this going forward. We will continue to work on this with whatever administration is in place – breeders don't support the current rule – it penalises those who have already lost either a foal or a mare or a pregnancy, and for what. A change to exclude free returns would give certainty to mare and stallion owners alike.
- We are yet to see the impact of our stallion book limits on the racing population. New Zealand does not have limits, which means the champion sires can serve significantly more mares in New Zealand than Australia, potentially making it open season to bring in quantities of highly suitable horses for racing in WA. We all recognise that the New Zealand product is excellent, and the owners who choose to buy from there are buying from the top 20% of the crop.
- The impact of the one year limit on frozen semen from deceased stallions will be interesting - a rule which we did not oppose and a rule which is consistent with nearly all jurisdictions except New Zealand.
- ⌚ The extension of the racing season to the end of the calendar year has worked well in providing additional months for horses to earn bonuses. However it has also spread the racing population far too thinly in WA, and many trainers and owners found it difficult to find starts for their horses. It's easy to say that "trainers will learn", but that doesn't help owners who can't always predict the racing pattern of their horse, and can never predict the racing pattern of somebody else's horse. WASBA does not believe the mix is right and some features should be moved to a timeframe earlier in the year. Most owners simply want to "have a go" when their horse is fit. You never know how long that will be with juveniles.
- The standalone WA handicapping system continues to cause concern for owners with horses who they consider need to be able to drop back in level, as the national system permits. Of course, there are plenty of complaints about the national system. However, we believe both should be evaluated to ensure we have the right product, and then make the appropriate changes. To be clear, we do not support 2yos racing with older horses. It simply reduces the opportunity to earn bonus money by combining two fields into one, let alone racing two groups of horses that are at totally different stages of growth and development. We strongly prefer 3yos to be given every opportunity to compete in their own age group, with sufficient racing opportunities provided.
- Covid-19 did impact early in the season but with luck and good management, we did escape the major adverse impacts. Let's keep it that way by continuing to be careful and sensible with our activities and hygiene. Overall, a credit to RWWA's handling of the situation.

📌 Statistics – the year in review

With such a change in the timing of feature races – effectively very few in the January to August timeframe, it makes any comparisons very difficult for season 21/22.

	2021/22	2020/21
<u>WA bred horses (compared to total horses):</u>		
Stakes earned	\$13,675,488 (55.0%) 	\$12,839,745 (54%)
Total Bonuses -	\$3,646,059	\$3,576,465
Starters –	1059 (67.7%)	1021 (65.2%)
Wins –	1306 (60.4%)	1198 (56.4%)
<u>All Fillies and Mares (compared to total horses):</u>		
Stakes earned	\$7,570,906 (30.5%) 	\$7,027,391 (29.6%)
Starters –	558 (35.7%)	537 (34.3%)
Wins –	670 (31.0%)	650 (30.6%)
Races	306 (14.2%)	288 (13.6%)
<u>Westbred Fillies and Mares (compared to total horses):</u>		
Stakes earned	\$4,909,359 (19.7%) 	\$4,402,981 (18.5%)
Total Bonuses -	\$1,560,493	\$1,609,467
Starters –	426 (27.2%)	396 (25.3%)
Wins	463 (21.4%)	414 (19.5%)

The results are heartening overall, with an improvement on the previous year, except for Westbred Bonuses. This was understandable, as the 2yo crop was the smallest crop in WA breeding history.

- 📌 Only \$281,000 (\$30,000 less than the previous 12 months) was earned in Epona Credits, and the owners of 43 mares made claims. Both these figures are disappointing and suggest that the increase in the maximum Epona Credit is well and truly due, to be of value to breeders. It also suggests that other mechanisms need to be in play to encourage breeders. There is a perplexing lack of understanding that low juvenile crops impact significantly on the racing pool when those horses turn 4 and 5 years of age, and this impacts significantly on the number of race meetings that can be held. There are also those who think that demand will increase supply, not reckoning with the 4 year time lag between breeding and racing.
- 📌 It remains of concern that only 4 fillies/mares earned more than \$100,000 compared to 12 males. We continue to raise this disparity in genuine earning opportunities between females and males. A number of additional \$30,000 races have been added to the calendar for 2023 and some races including the Norms Daughter Classic will have higher stakes, but we are seeking more effective changes to support the general racing population. It is critical to retain all of these fillies and mares – preferably in racing until they are ready for breeding.
- 📌 RWWA is undertaking all microchipping under contract for foals of 2021 and 2022. New, lower fees are applicable for those breeders who are diligent with their foaling registrations. We strongly support breeders being as prompt as possible in registering the result of the service, and appreciate the lower fees that RWWA have introduced. Freezebranding for identification purposes has ceased, but you can arrange your own identification brand. Interestingly the USTA is allowing owners to identification brand as well as microchipping.
- 📌 The OTT Passport and Off The Track Retraining program are really progressing and we have no objection to the 1% of the stakes budget now being put towards this welfare aspect. It's very important to our industry and we would like everyone to get on board with the best opportunities being provided for our off the track Standardbreds.
- 📌 Stallion levy is in. Along with every breeding organisation in Australia we did object. Breeders are now paying half the prizemoney for the Eureka Slot race. We do not consider that to be fair and want to see what the organisations that are benefiting are contributing. Nevertheless, it's up and running and certainly no problem getting Slot holders at such a low entry fee.

- 🕒 Australian and New Zealand horses remain attractive to the US market – especially with the exchange rate. Substantial stakes opportunities are available to both male and female. We should not lose sight of this in our race programs - owners are entitled to make decisions in their own best interest.
- ➡ Perception Survey. It was apparent from the results of the RWWA perception survey that there is a lack of responsiveness from RWWA in several areas, but particularly around handicapping and responding or listening to concerns. To their credit, RWWA propose to run quarterly seminars to identify what are the major issues and how they can be addressed.
- ➡ The Trots WA Facebook and Twitter sites are increasing their audience, and there certainly has been a bigger effort to engage with the industry with more news and stories. While we were greatly disappointed with the decision by RWWA to abandon the digital magazine, RWWA's Sian Hughes has made a huge effort to bridge the gap that was created.

Fundraising

Our sponsors have once again provided us with the necessary funds to continue our activities in support of breeders and those racing our WA bred horses. We were genuinely surprised with the level of support we received this year.

The Annual Stallion Tender, Stallion Raffle and our Breeders Stakes night remain our major fund raising events.

- **the 2022 Stallion Raffle** greatly exceeded expectations of a very low return and we were pleasantly surprised with the outcome. Alabar Farms, Llowalong Farms and Allwood Stud provided our major prizes of a choice of services to Art Major USA, Century Farroh CA and Fly Like An Eagle and the mix was obviously attractive to breeders. We sincerely thank the three studs for their generous support, and of course all the breeders who purchased tickets;
- **The Stallion Tender** covered 10 exciting stallions and breeders who participated received their stallion of choice at a discounted price. The line-up this year was supported by Allwood Stud, Woodlands Stud, Westbred Pacing, Cobbitty Equine, Global Breeding Farms, KTC Bloodstock, Medowie Lodge, Northern Rivers Equine/Llowalong Farms, Soho Standardbreds and Tourello Standardbreds.
- **the 2021 Breeders Stakes** was again strongly supported by our regular sponsors, Allwood Stud Farm, Budget Stockfeeds, Larkhill Vets, Milne Feeds, PSC Bloodstock Services, Ramsays Horse Transport and new sponsor Australian Premium Feeds.

I would especially like to thank Mark Hughes (Woodlands Stud), Brett Coffey (Alabar Farms), John Coffey (Llowalong Farms) and Bob Fowler (Allwood Stud) for their support during the 2021/2022 breeding season.

Issues and Opportunities

As an organisation we continue to focus on delivering the required support to the industry at every level. With 70-80% of breeders racing the horses they breed, maintaining a presence in all aspects of the industry where breeders might be impacted is important and will be pursued. As time progresses, achieving our aims is going to be more difficult without more people stepping forward to support the industry through WASBA or one of the other Eligible Bodies.

These are some of our focus points:

- ❖ 2yo and 3yo, fillies and mares and Westbred opportunities. We must continue to push the boundaries to raise the profile of these groups of horses. The extended racing season for 2yos and 3yos is providing benefit to some horses that would otherwise have missed opportunities to earn Westbred Bonus money, but there is more to do.

The improvement in racing results for our WA bred horses must continue, to provide the right impetus to breeders.

We continue to lobby for a premium race for mares that has sufficient stakes to attract more owners to purchase and race fillies, and mares in particular.

- ❖ *The Westbred and Epona Schemes* are the mainstay of our juvenile racing and we will continue to seek improvements where we see fit. Extensive lobbying by WASBA over a number of years has been worthwhile. An Epona type bonus for successful broodmares remains on our Agenda.
- ❖ *Pay To Last*. WASBA is unlikely to support further increases to the level of payment, without other beneficial changes occurring. We are still aiming for 20% stakes for second and 10% for third as stakes are increased. Breeders who race their progeny must earn enough from the racing system to cater for their breeding decisions. We welcome the improved stakes payments for placegetters in feature races.
- ❖ *The future of the WA TAB* has been decided recently – finally. It is not for sale. That wont make it easier in a very competitive market, but at least we know where we stand;
- ❖ *Testosterone*. The banning of mares from racing and breeding when they have very slightly elevated levels (above screening limits) of testosterone because they have an ovarian tumour must cease. This is inhumane. We will continue to raise this issue with HRA. The screening limits are not fit for purpose in this instance.
- ❖ *Breeding Numbers* are at the forefront of the thoughts of New Zealand, Victoria, NSW and Queensland administrators, hence the schemes introduced to reward breeders for sending their mare to stud. It just hasn't happened here, despite our best work to support various options. The small crop sizes that we are currently experiencing were predictable and are a major concern for our future racing product and race meeting calendar. All Eligible Bodies need to support improved outcomes for breeders.

There are a lot of factors that impact breeding numbers across Australia, some natural disasters and some man made. The 2021/22 breeding season may not be the right year to judge how well the harness industry in Australia is progressing, but whatever happened in 2021/22 needs to be done better in 2022/23.

WASBA continues to work for breeders and owners of mares and WA bred horses to ensure a stable and growing industry in our own backyard. We will continue to:

- provide information and resources for breeders;
- support breeders in maintaining their right to choose the right stallion for their mares
- support a single yearling sale in WA;
- support improved racing opportunities for fillies and mares;
- support Westsired incentives and races;
- monitor the race program to support additional targeted races;
- liaise at the national level in the interests of WA breeders
- continue to monitor national issues and promote outcomes that support WA.

Recognition

WASBA's purpose is to support the standardbred industry in WA by *“promoting, assisting and encouraging breeders and the sustainable breeding of standardbreds in WA”*.

I would like to sincerely thank the current Committee for the manner in which they continue to support WASBA members and the industry in Western Australia. Committee members are always available to discuss any matter that impacts breeders or other participants. We do have a number of Committee members that have served for many years, and we could not continue to operate without their dedicated support and contribution.

In particular, Vice President and Treasurer Howard King, despite a major health scare, has continued to be at the forefront of all our fund raising plans and has made the Stallion Tender and Raffle hugely successful with his efforts.

WASBA member and Facebook coordinator Denise Trobe had also continued to contribute where she is able, despite significant health issues.

I would also like to thank our representative on the RWWA Board, Bob Fowler, for his efforts in support of Harness racing in WA and for the recent increased stakes and bonuses.

Our workload is ever increasing and I apologise if we are unable to provide the interaction that we have previously delivered. We are always looking for prospective Committee members who can work hard and cast a fresh eye over our activities, but in the meantime we do have to prioritise what we do to achieve the best outcomes.

In Closing

The AGM is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, to identify areas to progress and to reset. Members have the opportunity to question and challenge, and also show their support.

Thank you to everyone who attended the AGM. We cannot continue to function without members attending the AGM – it is essential to meet our legal requirements.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all the members who have provided input to our activities or have responded to requests for comment.

We would like to see all southern hemisphere racing administrators work better with breeding organisations and breeders in general to produce a viable and attractive racing industry for the future, with greater transparency and collaboration on major issues.

My final comments - No breeding = No Horses = No Industry.

It's that simple. Mare owners need to be attracted to breeding from their mares to ensure that the racing pool of the future can be maintained. It is up to administrators to provide the right incentives – passion does not pay for feed.

Send us your concerns or feedback so that we can make harness racing a success for you. We are always available to answer your concerns or queries. If you do seek our assistance, we would appreciate you becoming a member.

A final quote from one of the leading harness administrators in Australia:

“It is important the industry understands the correlation between a strong breeding sector and an increase in the number of Standardbred owners in harness racing. The principle of supply and demand means attracting more owners can play a significant role in increasing future foal crops, which will attract bigger fields and create a product more attractive to punters.”



Everybody benefits from a strong local breeding industry

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STANDARDBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION INC
PO BOX 3237 EAST PERTH WA, 6892

PH 0447 053 040 ; EMAIL info@wasba.com.au

FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/WesternAustralianStandardbredBreederAssociation>

www.wasba.com.au

WASBA SPONSORS



✓ Alabar Bloodstock (03) 5859 2201 www.alabar.com.au	✓ Allwood Stud Farm, 9571 3777 www.allwoodstud.com.au
✓ Australian Pacing Gold (APG) www.apgold.com.au	✓ Budget Stockfeeds, Oakford 9397 1659 https://www.facebook.com/budget.stockfeeds/
✓ Cobbitty Equine Farm, 0417 621 050 www.cobbittyequine.com.au	✓ Decron Horse Care www.decron.com.au
✓ Gloucester Park Harness Racing www.gloucesterpark.com.au	✓ Larkhill Vets, Port Kennedy 9295 3838 www.milne.com.au
✓ KTC Bloodstock 0413 669 474 www.ktcbloodstock.com.au	✓ Milne Feeds, Welshpool 9351 0700 www.milne.com.au
✓ Northern Rivers Equine 03 5852 2845 www.nrequine.com.au	✓ Pacing WA (Ross Waddell) 0417 922 352 www.pacingwa.com
✓ PSC Bloodstock Services 0413 056 364 https://bloodstockservices.reliancepartners.com.au/	✓ Ramsays Horse Transport, 9277 5779 www.ramsayshorsetransport.com.au
✓ Soho Standardbreds www.sohostandardbreds.com.au	✓ Tourello Standardbreds
✓ Westbred Pacing, 0435 059 777 www.westbredpacing.com	✓ Woodlands Stud (freecall) 1800 615 143 www.woodlandsstud.co.nz