



June 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about horse racing. I too share your concern for the welfare of horses and wanted to inform you of the steps this Government and the Horse Welfare Board is taking.

I believe that the irresponsible use of the whip is completely unacceptable. The British Horseracing Association (BHA), the governing and regulatory body for the sport, requires that whips used in horse racing must be used responsibly, for safety reasons and only to encourage the horse.

The current BHA policy on the whip was drawn up in consultation with animal welfare groups, such as the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare. The latest rules include a threshold on the number of times the whip can be used before racing stewards can consider an inquiry. If the rules are broken, the jockey may be banned from racing for a certain number of days depending on the seriousness of the offence.

The Horse Welfare Board's five-year Horse Welfare Strategy, published in February 2020, contains 20 recommendations for improving horse welfare. It recommends that, as a minimum, the penalties for misuse of the whip need to increase and that the BHA should conduct a consultation on the use of the whip this year. As well as seeking views on appropriate sanctions for misuse of the whip, it also recommends that the BHA uses the consultation to consider whether the use of the whip for encouragement should be banned or retained and whether the rules that restrict the use of the whip for encouragement need to be changed. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this consultation once it has taken place.

In addition to sanctions from the sport, using the whip indiscriminately on horses could lead to a prosecution under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act, which makes it a criminal offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal. I

would encourage anyone with evidence that a racehorse has suffered unnecessarily from being whipped to report it to the local authority.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland', is displayed on a light yellow rectangular background.

James Sunderland MP

Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency

Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without