

MR MITCH HUTCHINGS– INQUIRY CONDUCTED

19 DECEMBER 2022

Harness Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) Stewards conducted an Inquiry today in relation to the mistreatment of a horse by Mr Mitch Hutchings between 15 October 2018 and 9 September 2019.

Mr Mitch Hutchings was present at the Inquiry and provided evidence, together with Mr Brett Hutchings.

A video of the incident in which Mr Hutchings is seen to strike a horse on two (2) occasions with a hammer was played at the Inquiry and entered into evidence together with HRNSW records.

Mr Mitch Hutchings pleaded guilty to three (3) charges issued by HRNSW Stewards pursuant to the Australian Harness Racing Rules (AHRR) as follows:

Charge 1 - AHRR 213. *A person shall not:-*

(a) by use of harness, gear, equipment, device, substance or any other thing inflict suffering on a horse;

Charge 2 - Issued in the alternative to Charge 1.

AHRR 218A. *(1) A person shall not mistreat a horse.*

(2) For the purposes of this rule “mistreat” means to abuse or treat a horse badly, cruelly or unfairly.

Charge 3 - AHRR 243. *A person employed, engaged or participating in the harness racing industry shall not behave in a way which is prejudicial or detrimental to the industry.*

HRNSW Stewards imposed the following penalties:

Charge 1: 18 months disqualification to commence immediately;
Charge 2: Issued in the alternative to Charge 1- Stewards did not proceed to the matter of penalty in respect of this charge at this time;
Charge 3: 18 months disqualification to be served concurrent to Charge 1.

In considering penalty Stewards were mindful of the following;

- The serious nature of these offences;
- Mr Hutchings’ guilty pleas;
- Mr Hutchings’ 1st welfare related offence;
- The circumstances of this incident and actions of Mr Hutchings;
- The impact of such conduct on the harness racing industry;
- Specific and general deterrence for such conduct;
- Mr Hutchings’ licence history and other personal subjective facts.

Mr Hutchings was advised of his right to appeal these decisions of the HRNSW Stewards.

For further information on this matter contact:
HRNSW Integrity Department
(02) 9722 6655