



WorldHorseWelfare

Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

Unwanted Horses – an NGO perspective

Roly Owers MRCVS
Chief Executive, World Horse Welfare





WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

Overview



WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

1. European equine sector
2. What is an unwanted horse?
3. The problem – UK case study
4. What are the main drivers of this situation?
5. What can be done about it?

World Horse Welfare



WorldHorseWelfare

Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

- Leading equine charity for 90 years
- Works across 4 continents
- Covers full spectrum of equine world
- 120 employees – €10m turnover
- Education, campaigns and hands-on care
- Policy engagement
- Advisor to regulators – e.g. FEI



Equines in the EU in the 21st century



WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

- Multiple uses: sport, leisure, companion, working, farm, therapy....
- Multiple change of uses in lifetime commonplace
- Can live 30+ years



European equine sector

Jobs, Growth and Investment

- 7 million equidae
- €100 billion+ per annum to economy
- 2.6 million hectares of land
- Key rural employer
 - Second largest in some Member States
 - At least 180,000 jobs in France
- Diverse but coordinated sector e.g. European Horse Network





WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

What is an unwanted horse?



**Economic
value**



**Emotional
value**



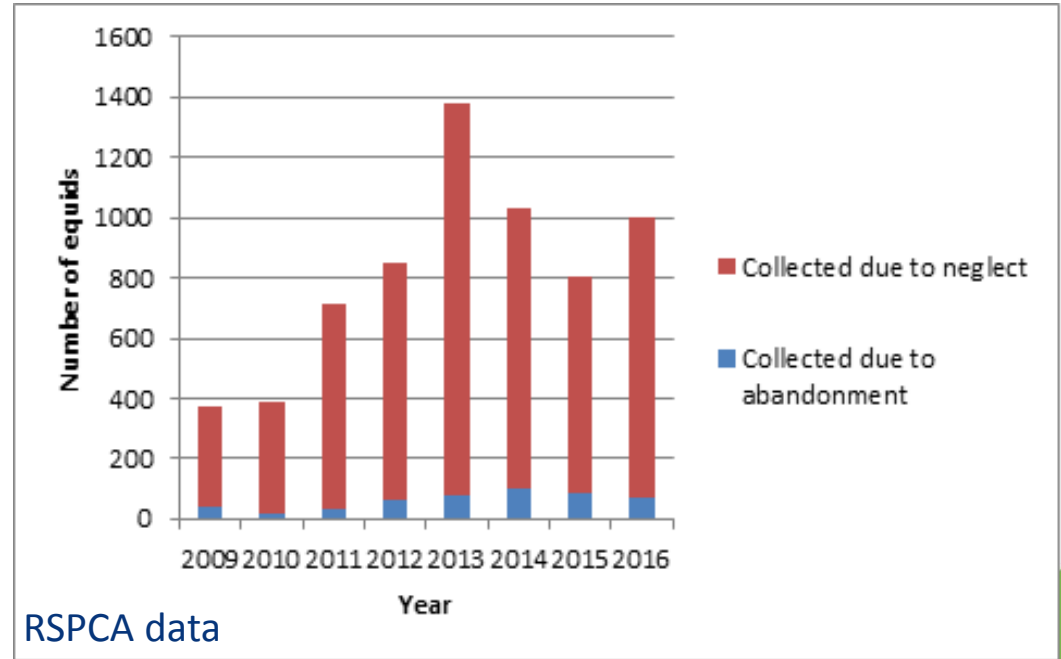
**Utility
value**

UK situation analysis



WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

- Equine population:
800,000+
- 2012: crisis erupts due to economic downturn
 - Estimated 9,000 horses at risk
 - ↑26% calls to RSPCA welfare line
 - ↑22% reports of equine neglect



...and the problem remains

- **2016:** 1,400 welfare cases investigated to World Horse Welfare & 8,000 calls to our welfare line
- **2017:** Approximately 7,000+ horses in the UK at risk of abuse, abandonment or neglect



What are the causes?



WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses



Excessive supply over demand – wastage

- Financial crash
- Low market value
- Rising costs for end of life services

- Irresponsible breeding
- Overbreeding: leisure & fashion

- Legislative limitations:
 - access to euthanasia
 - exclusion from food chain

Access to euthanasia in EU

KEY



Euthanasia allowed for any reason



Euthanasia only on veterinary advice



Unknown



Solutions

1. *Enforcement:* Equine ID Regulation (EU) 2015/262 – Member State animal health and welfare legislation
2. *Regulation:* affordable end of life options
3. *Education:* Julie Girling MEP Own Initiative Report on responsible ownership and care of equidae



WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses





WorldHorseWelfare
Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

Conclusion

- Equine sector hugely relevant to the EU
- Coordinated sector to help meet the challenge of the EU's unwanted horses
- EU Animal Welfare Platform can play a pivotal role through the establishment of an (informal?) equine sub-group

Everyone is responsible...



WorldHorseWelfare

Celebrating 90 years of helping horses

Thank you!

rolyowers@worldhorsewelfare.org

www.worldhorsewelfare.org

[@horsecharity](#)

[@rolyowers](#)