



**National Council  
of SPCAs**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Use**

**5 July 2025**

### **NSPCA Launches ‘Rein in the Pain’ Campaign to Tackle Cruelty in South African Horse Racing**

The Durban July may be South Africa’s most glamorous race day, but behind the fashion and fanfare lies a stark reality for the horses at the heart of it all. This year, the National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA) used the event as a springboard to launch “Rein in the Pain”, a bold national campaign to raise awareness about the suffering racehorses endure in the name of sport and spectacle.

While recognising that horse racing is a long-standing tradition for many, the NSPCA is calling for urgent reforms to protect the welfare of the horses involved, particularly those on the racing circuit, who fall under the care of the National Horse Racing Authority (NHRA).

“We understand the legacy tied to this sport,” says Jacques Peacock, Communications Manager at the NSPCA. “But tradition cannot be used to excuse ongoing cruelty. These magnificent animals are being silenced by a system that too often places profit above their welfare. Window-dressing measures and paltry fines may create the illusion of progress, but they do little to drive meaningful change or hold the industry genuinely accountable.”

#### **A Statement that Stopped the Show**

Actress and activist Nirvana Nokwe helped launch the campaign in unforgettable fashion at the Durban July, donning a thought-provoking art piece designed to challenge perceptions and spark conversation.

Her red-carpet look served as a haunting tribute to racehorses discarded after injury or poor performance, and her outfit was nothing less than a show-stopping performance.

“As a lover of the sport, of fashion and horses, I believe it’s imperative we promote and champion the ethical treatment of these incredible creatures, especially on such a prestigious

occasion. Using the Durban July, the biggest annual horse racing event, to highlight the broader issues of conduct and treatment of horses at lesser known events in South Africa is important,” Nokwe shared. “Hearing about the tongue-ties, severe whippings, broken bones, and bleeding lungs, at these less regulated events, has my heart broken, and left me deeply uncomfortable to simply just stay quiet. It’s time we use our influence where it matters, through fashion, through this petition we say end horse cruelty now.”

### **Pulling Back the Curtain on a Hidden Crisis**

The campaign highlights the often-ignored realities of horse racing, which include:

- **Tongue-ties**, which cause discomfort.
- **Performance-enhancing drugs**, which push horses beyond their natural limits.
- **Whipping**, which inflicts pain under the guise of motivation.
- **Collapsed lungs, fractured legs, and premature deaths**, often resulting from overexertion and unsafe conditions.
- **Early racing**, which places strain on young horses before their skeletons are fully developed.

### **A Roadmap for Change**

The NSPCA remains opposed to the use of animals in all sporting disciplines. However, in the interest of reducing cruelty and promoting immediate change, it has launched the NSPCA's proposed amendments to the Rules of the National Horseracing Authority (NHRA).

The NSPCA's proposed amendments to the Rules of the National Horseracing Authority (NHRA) set out clear, practical reforms designed to prevent the cruelty often experienced by horses on the racing circuit.

The NSPCA is calling on all industry stakeholders, including horse owners, trainers, jockeys, breeders, and racing associations, to commit to:

- Banning drugs and harmful training aids
- Ending and banning the use of whipping
- Phasing out harmful equipment, such as tongue ties
- Halting the practice of racing horses before full skeletal maturity
- Providing lifetime welfare, not just track-time care
- Adhering to animal welfare laws and related regulations, and reporting any abuse to the appropriate authorities

“These proposed amendments to the Rules of the National Horseracing Authority (NHRA) are a work in progress, and we invite industry stakeholders to engage with us, collaborate, and help shape a more compassionate future for horse racing,” says Peacock.

### **Sign the Petition. Be Their Voice.**

The NSPCA is urging all South Africans to stand with them by signing the petition at [nspca.co.za/ReinInThePain](https://nspca.co.za/ReinInThePain). Public support is vital to show the industry that South Africans demand real change and expect better protection for the animals who make this sport possible.

“Our goal is simple,” says Peacock. “We want racing stakeholders to acknowledge the cruelty and commit to ending it. With enough public support, we can shift the culture of racing in South Africa towards accountability, compassion, and real reform.”

The glamour and spotlight may fade after race day, but the suffering continues long after. It’s time we rein in the pain together and take a stand to stop cruelty.

For more information on the campaign, follow the NSPCA's social media channels or visit <https://nspca.co.za/>.

Instagram: @nspca.rsa

X/Twitter: @NSPCA\_SA

Facebook: @NSPCA - National Council of SPCAs

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nspcasouthafrica/>

TikTok: [https://www.tiktok.com/@nspca\\_rsa](https://www.tiktok.com/@nspca_rsa)

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### **About the NSPCA**

The NSPCA is a non-profit organisation that has been protecting South Africa’s animals since 1955. Their mission is to prevent cruelty, promote kindness, and alleviate the suffering of animals, guided by the Five Freedoms, which form a comprehensive framework for animal welfare.

For further information or access to interviews and higher-resolution images, please contact: [thato@slaps.global](mailto:thato@slaps.global)