STEWARDS INQUIRY INTO THE CARE AND WELFARE AFFORDED TO HORSES IN THE CARE OF REGISTERED BREEDER/OWNER MR NEALE BRUCE

**Scone Racecourse** **2 November 2026**
**Via videoconference**

**Stewards:** **D R Hadley (Chairman)**
**M W Cleaver**
**L J Martin**

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In August 2026, Racing NSW Officials commenced an investigation into the euthanasia, destruction and disposal of a number of thoroughbred horses in the care of registered breeder and owner Mr Neale Bruce at Berkeley Park Stud, Blandford.

On 20 August 2026, Racing NSW Officials attended Berkeley Park Stud and established that 13 thoroughbred horses had been destroyed, with eight horses destroyed by firearm at Berkeley Park Stud and five horses transported to Kankool Pet Food for destruction and disposal.

Racing NSW Officials conducted an interview with Mr Bruce and obtained and reviewed relevant records and other evidence concerning the horses and the circumstances of their destruction and disposal.

Racing NSW Stewards conducted an inquiry at Scone Racecourse on 21 September 2026. A brief of evidence compiled by Racing NSW Investigator Ms Nikki Burke was tendered, and oral evidence was taken from Mr Bruce who was assisted by solicitor Mr Darren Kane. Further evidence was taken from Racing NSW Official Veterinarian Dr Rose Bensley.

The inquiry was adjourned to allow the Stewards to consider the evidence.

On Friday, 25 September 2026, Mr Bruce provided additional evidence for the Stewards' consideration. After considering that additional evidence, together with the evidence adduced during the inquiry, Racing NSW Stewards issued thirteen (13) charges against Mr Bruce, as detailed below.

On Wednesday, 30 September 2026, Mr Bruce, assisted by his solicitor, Mr Kane, provided submissions in respect of the charges. Following consideration of those submissions, the Stewards amended the charges, to which Mr Bruce entered pleas of guilty. The Stewards formally found Mr Bruce guilty of all thirteen (13) charges.

An application by Mr Kane for a period of 21 days in which to provide written submissions in relation to penalty was granted by the Stewards.

On 28 October 2026, the Stewards received the written submissions on penalty. Having regard to those submissions and all relevant considerations, the Stewards determined the penalties as detailed below.

**Charges issued against Mr Neale Bruce**

**Charges 1–8: LR114(4) – Horses destroyed by firearm**

The details of Charges 1 to 8 are that Mr Bruce, being a registered owner with Racing NSW and registered breeder with the Australian Stud Book and a person in charge of, or having possession, control or custody of the relevant horses, euthanized or destroyed the following thoroughbred horses by firearm at Berkeley Park Stud in circumstances contrary to LR114(4):

- *Acadiens*
- *Starskin*
- *Riverina Bella*
- *Kitty Purring*
- *Tennessee Mischief*
- *Winta Chiller*
- *Mia's Got Class*
- *Ellsberg/Lustrous 2025*

In respect of each horse, a registered veterinary surgeon had not certified in writing that euthanasia was necessary on welfare or safety grounds, Racing NSW had not approved the euthanasia or destruction in writing, and there were no extreme circumstances requiring immediate euthanasia with that decision subsequently confirmed by a veterinary surgeon.

**Plea: Guilty**
**Finding: Guilty**

**Charges 9–13: LR114(4) – Horses transported to Kankool Pet Food**

The details of Charges 9 to 13 are that Mr Bruce, being a person in charge of, or having possession, control or custody of the relevant horses, caused or permitted the following thoroughbred horses to be transported alive to Kankool Pet Food for the purpose of being destroyed and processed for pet food in circumstances contrary to LR114(4):

- *Cindarockinrella*
- *Pride of Dubai/Mia's Got Class 2023*
- *Churchill/Kimi 2023*
- *Supido/Demilune 2023*
- *Acrobat/Chloe Elien 2023*

**Plea: Guilty**
**Finding: Guilty**

**Penalty**

The following penalty considerations were taken into account –

- Guilty pleas entered at the first reasonable opportunity and cooperation with the investigation and inquiry
- Objective seriousness of each contravention and the circumstances of each horse.
- Previous decisions
- Number of horses involved and the scale and course of conduct
- Mr Bruce's personal and professional circumstances, including his approximately 45 years in the industry without prior disciplinary findings, prior good character, health issues and financial circumstances
- Principles of general and specific deterrence and the message conveyed to the industry concerning such conduct.
- The importance of equine welfare for the thoroughbred racing industry prior to, during racing and on retirement
- Purpose of issuing penalties as a protective measure for the image, interests and welfare of the thoroughbred racing industry

**Charges 1, 4, 5 and 7: LR114(4) – Indicative penalty of nine months disqualification for each charge**

In respect of Charges 1, 4 and 5, Stewards recognised the evidence of injury or deterioration and the genuine welfare considerations that informed Mr Bruce's decisions. In respect of Charge 7, Stewards acknowledged the particular custodial and financial circumstances in which Mr Bruce was left responsible for the horse and its upkeep. These circumstances warranted lower indicative penalties, notwithstanding his failure to obtain the required authorisation.

**Charges 2, 3, 6 and 8: LR114(4) – Indicative penalty of twelve months disqualification for each charge**

These offences involved decisions to destroy horses principally influenced by financial or commercial considerations, without an established veterinary necessity. The indicative penalties reflect the seriousness of those decisions and the absence of sufficient welfare justification.

**Charges 9–13: LR114(4) – Indicative penalty of eighteen months disqualification for each charge**

These offences involved five horses transported alive to Kankool for destruction and processing into pet food, without an established veterinary necessity. Stewards regarded the destination and intended use of the horses as significant aggravating circumstances. While acknowledging the circumstances in which Mr Bruce had been left responsible for these horses, Stewards considered these offences the most serious.

The indicative penalties, assessed before any allowance for guilty pleas or subjective mitigation, totalled fourteen years and six months disqualification.

The Stewards did not consider complete concurrency appropriate. Each charge concerned a separate horse and an independent obligation under LR 114(4). Complete concurrency would

fail to adequately reflect the number of horses involved and the overall seriousness of the offending.

However, applying the principle of totality, Stewards considered that the full aggregate penalty would be excessive. Having assessed the offending as a whole, Stewards determined that an effective aggregate period of ten years disqualification was appropriate before allowance for guilty pleas and personal mitigation.

Stewards afforded Mr Bruce a reduction of the penalty in recognition of his admissions, cooperation, guilty pleas at the first reasonable opportunity, and his subjective circumstance. Accordingly, Stewards reduced the total period of disqualification to a period of six years and six months.

The period of disqualification commenced on 20 August 2026 and expires on 20 February 2033.

Mr Bruce was advised of his appeal rights.

**APPEAL LODGED AGAINST SEVERITY OF PENALTY ONLY.**

**Relevant Rules:**

***LR114(4) Equine Welfare***

*(4) A registered owner, trainer or any person that is in charge of or has in his or her possession, control or custody of any horses (Eligible Horses, Unnamed Horses and Named Horses) is not to euthanize or destroy a horse (or permit a horse to be euthanized or destroyed) unless a registered veterinary surgeon has certified in writing that it necessary on welfare or safety grounds, or for reasons approved in writing by Racing NSW, or unless under extreme circumstances where it is necessary for a horse to be euthanized immediately and the decision is subsequently confirmed by a veterinary surgeon. In the event that a registered veterinary surgeon has certified in writing that it necessary for a horse to be euthanized on welfare or safety grounds or for reasons approved in writing by Racing NSW, then the horse can only be euthanized by a registered veterinary surgeon and is not to be sent to an abattoir or knackery or similarly disposed of.*

***AR 263 Prohibitions on persons and their conduct while disqualified***

*Unless otherwise authorised by the PRA which imposed a disqualification (and upon such conditions as that PRA may in its discretion impose), a person disqualified under these Australian Rules must not, during the period of that disqualification:*

*(l) conduct or assist with thoroughbred breeding in Australia;*
*(m) attend or participate in thoroughbred horse sales or related events;*
*(n) permit or authorise any other person to conduct any activity associated with thoroughbred racing, thoroughbred horse sales and/or breeding for or on behalf of the disqualified person; and/or*
*(o) receive any direct or indirect financial or other benefit derived from thoroughbred racing and/or breeding in Australia.*

***D R Hadley – General Manager, Investigations – Racing NSW***