



I Speak for Paws

HORSES AND RACING

Tammy Wunsch | August 2018

About the Author

Tammy Wunsch currently resides in the Quiet Corner of Connecticut though she has also called both New York City and Los Angeles home. Formally educated in business, she has worked in a variety of industries and is both entrepreneurial and adventurous by nature. She is passionate about animals and loves to travel, cook, kayak, and read.

Her current role is as a Freelance Copywriter who promotes portable income opportunities (PIO), as well as living, product, and service options for current and future expatriates.

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Remember to always use your voice to speak for those who have none.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws!

Derby No More

ispeakforpaws.com/derby-no-more

May 6, 2016



Horses are one of the most exquisite species of animals on the planets. Glistening coats, flowing tails and manes, sleek and graceful bodies – they are just about perfect.

As a kid, I took horseback riding lessons and went to Girl Scout horse camp. I loved everything about it! I dreamed of the day I could have a horse of my own. At seven years old, I asked my parents if I could have a horse. They replied that we would talk about it again when I was ten, clearly hoping my obsession would be over by then. It wasn't.

Of course, I interpreted the brush off as a promise that I would definitely get a horse of my own at ten – nuances are not very clear to a seven year old. For three years, I studied every horse-themed magazine I could get my hands on and designed my dream stable and pasture. Somehow, my front and back yards were, in my fanciful imagination, transfigured completely to a horse's paradise.

As you probably have realized, I never got my horse. I continued to take riding lessons and attend horse camp – and still dreamed of the day I would have a horse of my own. I also became enchanted with the world of horse racing.

Horse races seemed so sophisticated. Thousands of people, dressed up nicely, drinking fancy drinks, placing wagers on which horse would win, hobnobbing with celebrities. As I grew older, I started watching the three most glamorous and widely known races, the Triple Crown of racing, the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont Stakes.

I tried to meet up with friends to watch the race, but if I was home, I would “watch” whichever race was being broadcast on the phone with another horse-loving friend. We would cheer as if we had gambled our own money and be devastated if “our” horse didn’t win. As I got older, we would have race watching parties. For the Derby, we made mint juleps and wore fancy hats like those who were actually there. We started a small pool where we could bet on a horse for one dollar, (\$1.00) and whoever’s horse came in first, or closest to first, won the pool. Sometimes we would go to bars that were broadcasting the races and cheer with other patrons, talking about the horses as if they were our own. It was glorious!

When I lived in New York, I went to the Belmont Stakes three times. It was as enchanting as I had dreamed. We splurged and purchased seats in the grandstand. We toured the grounds and visited the horses. We drank fancy drinks in the bar and placed wagers on each of the races. We needed a tutorial on how to read the Racing Form and figure out who to bet on, but it was fun. I don’t really like to gamble that much so I never lost very much – of course, I never won very much either, but that’s the trade off. All in all, it was glorious!

For years, one of my best friends had always said she wanted to celebrate her “big” birthday by attending all three Triple Crown races that year. Even though many of us had spread throughout the country, we were all in agreement that that would be a fantastic trip.

Then, something happened. It really wasn’t an “Ah-ha!” moment. Rather a gradual dawning of comprehension and knowledge. I started learning about the seamier side of horse racing. As trendy as it is for race attendees, the horses’ experience is far less elegant. The racing industry is motivated solely by financial gain and the prestige of owning a winning horse.

The misery starts from the time the horse is six months old. It is separated from its mother and begins training to race. The average racing life of a thoroughbred is only three years. The fertility cycle is manipulated in order for a mare to produce a foal every year when she would normally produce one only every two years. The mare is pregnant approximately 90 percent of her life. When the breeder is done with her, she is typically discarded or euthanized.

To keep a champion mare pregnant so often, her foal needs to be taken away from her so that she can be re-impregnated. This typically happens when the foal is 30 days old. The foal, however, is potentially lucrative and must be provided with a nurse mare. A nurse mare is generally a non-thoroughbred mare that has had her own foal and is producing milk. The breeder has no use for this nurse mare’s foal and either euthanizes the foal or dumps it on the side of the road to die slowly of neglect and starvation. Thankfully there are rescues who travel around during foaling season, searching for these abandoned nurse mare foals, giving them a chance at life.

More money is actually made from breeding than racing. This leads to foals with deformities being instantly euthanized. Some may be treated surgically, but this risks further injury to the foal. Horses at thoroughbred sales can be sold for tens of thousands of dollars, or a few hundred dollars if they are destined for the slaughterhouse.

Horses destined for the race horse start their training regime which places enormous stress on

their young, skeletal frame. Many sustain injuries and will never see the inside of a race track. After injuries render them unprofitable, most are discarded.

Horses are social creatures and are most content while grazing in an open pasture with other horses. Horses that are training for racing are typically confined in their stall for up to 22 hours per day. They are prohibited from socializing and endure an extreme training regimen which can lead to neurotic behavior, stomach ulcers, and respiratory diseases.

Racing causes great physical strain on a horse's body. Horses are not designed for racing. They begin training strenuously before their skeletal systems have fully developed and their growth plates are not fully mature. This causes fractures, pulled tendons, and torn ligaments. Over time, this causes more serious physical ailments, injuries, and even death.

In the wild, horses run fast, but only for short periods of time. In a race, jockeys use whips to force their horse to continue often past the point of exhaustion. A survey in Britain found that jockeys use their whip on average of 30 times per race, even when the horses are past the point of exhaustion and out of contention. Horses are also often fed illegal drugs to mask injuries or illnesses.

The New York Times reported in 2012 ("*Mangled Horses, Maimed Jockeys*") that on average, 24 racehorses die on racetracks every week at racetracks in the United States. Most are on lesser known tracks than the race tracks that host the Triple Crown. In 2008, Eight Belles broke two ankles while running the Kentucky Derby and had to be euthanized on the track. This spurred Congress to action and they received promises from the racing industry to make the "sport" safer. While anabolic steroids have been banned, lax enforcement, inaccurate data, and limited testing make it difficult to track the true number of injuries and deaths that actually occur at the track.

After discovering the horrifying truth about horse racing, I decided I needed to stop supporting an industry which is so callous, cruel, and inhumane to horses. Last year, I made plans with my friend who had wanted to attend all three Triple Crown races for her big birthday – coincidentally her big birthday was last year – to not watch the race at all. I stayed away from the television and caught just a few glimpses of the race on the news. I wasn't so lucky for the Preakness. I had planned not to watch the race, but I was at a pub and race highlights was on the television directly across from me. I tried to look away, but American Pharoah took my breath away and ended up watching most of the race through highlights.

Then came the Belmont Stakes. American Pharoah had won two of the Triple Crown jewels. Horse racing had not produced a Triple Crown winner since Affirmed in 1978. My friend and I discussed in length what we should do. We were both determined to give up watching the cruel sport of kings, but we had watched these damn Triple Crown races all these years, hoping and praying for another Affirmed, Seattle Slew, or Secretariat. I admit it. We were weak. Like years past, we watched the race together on the phone. We did cheer with the rest of the world when American Pharoah won. I now feel that it was the proper way for me to be content with my decision to say good-bye to horse racing.

On Saturday, the 142nd running of the Kentucky Derby will take place. I will not be dressing up in a big hat. I will not be drinking a mint julep. I will only miss watching the race a little bit. I will feel slightly morally superior to those who continue to watch the abusive, greedy horse racing industry make money literally off the backs of these magnificent creatures.

If I miss hearing the melodious tones of "My Old Kentucky Home", I will find it on YouTube or somewhere else online. I will fervently be hoping that no injuries befall the horses in this, and every other, race taking place that day. I will continue to speak out about the brutal treatment that race horses receive. I will continue to speak out about the inhumane breeding practices, the nurse mares, and the abandoned nurse mare foals.

Mostly, I vow that I WILL NOT watch any portion of the Triple Crown races this, and every year going forward.

It is important that you also speak up for those who have no voices and cannot speak up for themselves. If you are able, seek out the kind hearts who rescue the nurse mare foals and help them care for these abandoned beauties.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws.

Tammy Wunsch



Horse Racing Is A Death Match

ispeakforpaws.com/horse-racing-is-a-death-match

May 23, 2016



I was feeling pretty smug about myself a few weeks ago. I wrote a post about the Kentucky Derby (*Derby No More*) and was resolute in my assertion that I was done with horse racing. I had conducted further research into the sport and read a sobering statistic: approximately 24 horses die on race tracks every week at racetracks in the United States. Every week. Just in the United States. This does not even begin to account for racetracks across the world where there are not even token animal protection laws in place. I searched for statistics of worldwide horse racing deaths, but there does not appear to be any reliable database. If anyone comes across valid statistics, please send me the link.

Then, Saturday rolled around. I had generally noted that it was the day for the Preakness – after many years of being a horse race watcher, you are attuned to the schedule. Again, I was feeling a vague sense of smugness in the knowledge that I wouldn't be contributing to the agony experienced by those poor race horses at Pimlico. That smugness drained away in a pool of sadness though when I saw the first reports appear on my Facebook newsfeed. Two horses had already met their death in the first four races of the day. *HomeboyKris*, a nine year old gelding who raced in the 2010 Kentucky Derby, won the first race of the day and collapsed on his way back to the stable. Authorities believe he suffered a cardiovascular collapse. During the fourth race, Pramedya, a four year old filly, fractured her leg on the turf of the final turn and was euthanized on the track.

Rick Arthur, equine director of the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and the California Racing Board took a rather blasé approach to the deaths, calling them a probability issue and saying that its “hard to make a determination from anything like that.” Really? Hard to make a determination that horse racing is really just a death match where the winner doesn’t even stay alive? Is this person seriously in charge of horses anywhere?

Attendees learned of the deaths as news spread via cell phones. No announcements were made at the track. Coincidentally, Pramedya’s owners, Roy and Gretchen Jackson, also owned Barbaro, the 2006 Kentucky Derby winner who shattered his leg in the Preakness and was later euthanized. They were so unaffected by Pramedya’s death that they stayed the rest of the day and continued watching races.

Homeboykris’ owner, Florida-based Stirrup Trouble LLC, acquired him in 2009 and wanted to see that he had a good home. I guess that didn’t include letting him retire in peace and not subject his nine year old body to the torture and stress of horse racing. He was a gelding and thus unable to earn his keep as a stud so instead, pushed himself past his physical limits and endurance and shattered his leg on the track.

When do we say that enough is enough? When do we stop this barbaric sport where multiple horses die every week? When do we stop making horse racing glamorous? Horse racing is not about dressing up and drinking fancy drinks. It is about training horses past their endurance, segregating these social animals so as not to interfere in their grueling training schedules. It is about breeding them for profit and keeping mares pregnant for 90 percent of their lives. It is about treating the callous disregard for these majestic animals’ life. So much contempt for their sacrifices that their deaths are not even noted.

Use your voice to speak up for these horses who have no voice. Use your voice and speak out against the horse racing industry.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws!

Tammy Wunsch



Derby Death Match

ispeakforpaws.com/derby-death-match

May 5, 2017



May...Temperatures start to get warmer...The trees start to bloom...The air smells of cut grass...The grass is unbelievably green...And, the first weekend brings the start of the Triple Crown death match – the Kentucky Derby.

While many are duped into believing that horse racing is glamorous and exciting, it is anything but that for the horses. Horses are routinely whipped during races to urge them to win. Some claim the whip doesn't hurt the horse, but watch any video of a jockey using the whip and tell me you would like it used on you in such a manner?

Trainers and horse racing staff drug horses to make them run faster or appear healthier. The main goal of doping a horse is to mask illness or injury and not generally for the benefit of the horse. It is certainly non-consensual and usually illegal.

Racehorses are confined up to 23 hours per day. Pictures of them lazing in open fields or running through green pastures are published merely to fool people into believing that the horses are happy. They are exercised one hour per day merely to train them to become profitable. When a horse is no longer profitable – either through racing or breeding – they are sold off to the highest bidder. Oftentimes, the highest bidder is a foreign abattoir who will butcher the horse for meat.

Training a racehorse begins when the horse is 18 months old and they begin to race at two. A horse's body is not fully developed until they reach six years of age, so their bodies are being

pounded and whipped when they are still basically toddlers.

It is estimated that nearly 2,000 horses die on American race tracks annually. This doesn't include horses that were injured and later euthanized away from the track. Again, this is only American racetracks. Conditions in other countries are even more deplorable.

As if the thoroughbreds weren't treated badly enough, the breeding side of the business has an even darker side. Breeders call them "junk mares" and that act as a nurse mare to budding baby racehorses. A non-thoroughbred mare is bred so that she can be leased out to provide lactation for foals of thoroughbred mares. Horse gestation is 11 months and mares will go back into heat 7-10 days after giving birth. The thoroughbred mare is kept as a horse incubator until she can no longer function. After all, a thoroughbred isn't profitable if she is nursing a foal. The nurse mare is merely a method of feeding the valuable thoroughbred foal.

The abandoned nurse mare's foal has an even bleaker, more tortured existence. If they are not immediately clubbed to death, they may be starved or sold to the tanning industry where they are skinned. Pony leather is generally leather made from these discarded and unwanted foals. The fortunate few are rescued by horse advocacy groups – after being abandoned at the side of the road, but many more are slaughtered to provide meat for foreign palates.

I stopped watching horse racing a few years ago. Honestly, I did miss the races the first year. I would get together with friends to watch the Triple Crown races. We would each pick our favorites and bet one dollar – winner takes all. Mint juleps were consumed during the Derby and I even went to Belmont twice. I get the allure.

The bubble has burst for me now, and that is a good thing. If I can stop participating in the barbaric events, then so can you. Or, do you want to be responsible for perpetuating a life of misery, sorrow, and death for those beautiful and majestic animals? The industry will continue as long as there are race attendees and bettors. We need to ensure that horses are no longer treated as commodities and are instead afforded lives of peace and tranquility.

If you still feel good about watching horses being tortured during a race and don't care about their lives of misery, then please don't call yourself a horse-lover. If you truly care about horses, you will educate yourself about the horrors of the horse racing industry. If you really want to use your money for the good of horses, then donate to a horse rescue organization. As always, do your research to ensure that most of your donation is being used for the animals.

I know I won't be watching the Derby Death Match on Saturday and I sincerely hope you won't either. Please let me know in the comments what you will be doing instead – I'd love to hear from you.

It is necessary to speak for those who have no voice.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws!

Tammy Wunsch



A Tragic Ending

ispeakforpaws.com/a-tragic-ending

December 23, 2016



I have a sad update to the post I wrote in March, *The Spectrum of Animal Welfare* about the horse that was found abandoned in a stall at an auction stable with over 125 paintball injuries. Lily, the abused horse, died in June of this year after a tumultuous few months.

The white mare was thin and blind in one eye, presumably from being shot with a paint ball. She was discovered after the auction ended with no apparent owner claiming her in March. The auction brought her to the Penn Vet New Bolton Center and cared for there. She was then adopted in May by Jon Stewart, of *Daily Show* fame, and his wife Tracey – they run a rescue for abused and rescued animals in New Jersey. Lily was able to live out her final month happy and content. In June, she fell and broke a bone in her neck from which she could not recover. The Stewarts had her euthanized to end her pain and suffering.

I am not sure we will ever know Lily's full story. It was later discovered that she was owned by Doreen Weston. Ms. Weston owns Smoke Hollow Farm in Pittstown, NJ. Ms. Weston claims the paint on Lily's body was not from paint balls, but rather Lily had been used as a living paint canvas for children to finger paint on. Who in their right mind would think that is a good idea? She claims it was okay for the horse as the paint was non-toxic and would get washed off in the pasture. She didn't even have the decency to wash the paint off the horse after subjugating her to mistreatment for profit.

The horse had lived at the Smoke Hill Farm for years and Ms. Weston had used her for lessons until she couldn't be used anymore. Lily's eyesight was failing and her teeth were in bad condition. Ms. Weston claims the vet told her there was nothing that could be done for Lily, so she contracted Philip Price, a horse dealer from Rhode Island, to "get rid of the horse". Mr. Price did just that – abandoning Lily at a horse auction. Mr. Price was later arrested, charged, and convicted of animal cruelty. He faces fines and is banned from participating at the auction where Lily was abandoned. No jail time. Unbelievable! Oh, and in 2015 Mr. Price had pleaded no contest to eight unrelated counts of animal cruelty in Rhode Island. He is not someone I would ever trust with an animal.



Something about Ms. Weston's story appears a bit fishy. If the paint truly came from children's finger paints, then why was Lily so sore that she shied away in pain when the vet tried to initially treat her? Why was the horse so malnourished? Clearly, she was neglected and treated inhumanely.

The teeth that Ms. Weston claimed were untreatable? They were filed down and Lily was able to eat – gaining nearly 150 pounds in less than two months. One eye had to be removed after it was deemed too damaged, but her other eye was treated with an experimental treatment enabling 80 percent of her sight to return in that eye. Ms. Weston also started claiming that Lily could not have been her horse, but another white mare that Price must have picked up that also had paint on it. If it was her horse, Ms. Weston claims that her injuries must have happened after leaving her farm. A malnourished, neglected, near-blind, unable to eat, covered in paint horse picked up by Price, but not her malnourished, neglected, near-blind, unable to eat, covered in paint horse? The world, unlike Lily, is not blind. The coincidences add up to a case of animal cruelty and Smoke Hill Farm should be thoroughly investigated.

I'm not sure whether the paint on Lily was also from children's finger paint or just from paint balls, but clearly, Lily did not paint herself. Ms. Weston was done with Lily and apparently indifferent to her suffering. Anyone who could let an animal in their care become malnourished and blind with infection is clearly not an animal-lover and only cares about the profit they can earn off of its back. I think an investigation needs to take place to see if Ms. Weston is using any of her other horses for "finger painting".

Ms. Weston is not the only person at fault though. If she was advertising a living canvas on which children could finger paint, then the fault also lies on parents who would book such an event. You cannot blame the children as they have not been taught that it is wrong to subjugate an animal for entertainment. Adults should know better. Mr. Price should have known better.

Thirteen months after starting this blog and the fight has been renewed within me. We must not tolerate the abuse of animals in any form of entertainment. We must boycott all venues that exploit animals for the sake of profit: zoos, aquariums, circuses, roadside attractions, movies, television shows, advertisements, and amusement parks. Tell the people that own and operate these atrocities that they will not receive your tourism dollars. We must educate others on why owning exotic animals is bad and does not promote conservationism in any way.

We must use our voices to speak for those who have none!

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