

media release

THE ONLY LOSER IS THE HORSE

The Australian Jockeys Association may have won by a nose but the RSPCA is warning jockeys that from this point on they will have a lot of eyes on them every time they whip their horses.

“The RSPCA is glad that the Australian Racing Board hasn’t given jockeys the mandate they wanted; to whip horses as much as they like in the end stages of a race. But we are disappointed they felt the need to capitulate at all, especially when all the evidence proved the new rules were working,” said RSPCA Australia CEO, Heather Neil.

“The Australian Jockeys Association has been disingenuous during this whole debacle. There is no evidence to back up their claims that this is a safety issue, in fact a 40% drop in interference on the track has been directly attributed to horses not moving away from the whip.

“There is also no evidence to support their assertion that padded whips don’t hurt. They may not cause as much pain as traditional contact whips but they are painful, why else would you use them?

“Jockeys need to focus on changing the way they ride and trainers and owners should support their efforts to have less reliance on whips. Today’s decision by the ARB to provide remedial training to jockeys who break the new rules is an excellent step in this direction.

“This has become bigger than whips. This is about improving the treatment of horses in the racing industry.

“The AJA had an opportunity to show leadership by embracing these changes and the only losers from this whole process are the horses. The RSPCA and in fact the Australian community are justified in their extreme disappointment.”

What is the compromise?

The compromise reached today by the ARB and AJA doesn’t increase the number of times a horse can be struck by a whip but instead gives jockeys more discretion to decide when to use their allotted strikes. While jockeys must still only whip the horse on alternate strides inside the final 200 metres of a race, they can now use the whip a total of seven times in the last 100 metres. Repeated breaches will result in remedial training for jockeys.