

## media release

### Science prize for research that whipped horses don't run faster

Research revealing the futility of whipping racehorses has attracted one of Australia's most prestigious awards for science.

The *2011 Voiceless Eureka Prize for Scientific Research that Contributes to Animal Protection* was last night awarded to Professor Paul McGreevy and his team of scientists, for research aimed at improving the welfare of the ridden horse, including a pivotal investigation of the impact of whipping on performance in Thoroughbred races.

The research team comprises the University of Sydney's Professor McGreevy, Honorary Associate Professor David Evans and Honorary Associates Dr Andrew McLean and Dr Bidda Jones. Dr Jones is also RSPCA Australia's Chief Scientist.

Co-author of the whipping study, Dr David Evans, said the results offered no support for the retention of whipping in horse racing.

"We looked at running times in a series of races, how whips were used and whether that whip use influenced the outcome of a race. What we found was that whipping did not affect the probability of whether or not a horse finished a race in the first three placings."

Animal behaviour expert Professor Paul McGreevy said he hoped this research would highlight the fallacy and futility of whipping.

"Top performance horses have been bred and prepared to give of their best. Add to that excellent horsemanship and you've got a winning combination. That's all you need. We have evidence here that great horsemanship does not involve flogging tired horses."

The research was funded by RSPCA Australia and carried out with the assistance of Racing New South Wales.

"Working with Paul McGreevy and the rest of the team has been a wonderful collaboration," said Dr Bidda Jones.

"The mix of expertise in equine behaviour, physiology, training and animal welfare has led to several important advances in our understanding of the challenges faced by horses in sport and has thrown a spotlight on the use of whips in racing.

"It's also been encouraging to those involved in other equine disciplines such as dressage and showjumping, who are seeking to improve horse welfare."

The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are the most coveted science awards in Australia. Director of the Australian Museum, Frank Howarth, said Professor McGreevy's team had been instrumental in bringing an ethical dimension to horse training and racing at an international level.

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“Moreover, the team has shown through scientific research that much of the harm currently inflicted on horses in sport bears no real benefits anyway.”

**The \$10,000 *Voiceless Eureka Prize for Scientific Research That Contributes to Animal Protection* is awarded to an individual or team for scientific research that has contributed, or has the potential to contribute, to animal protection.**

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