



Bringing Experienced Owners Together - Joining Forces to Buy Better Horses - Campaigning for Change

**BEST OF
THE BLOG**

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ROA National Racehorse Owners Survey – Part 1, A Summary of the Results

“There are important differences between the factors that bring new owners into the sport and those that discourage them and drive them out of the game. That two-factor model needs to be developed by British Racing in more detail.”

When I took part in the BHA's pillar strategy process a couple of years ago, one of the frustrations was the lack of facts and data on which to ground discussions and the formulation of important initiatives. The Racehorse Owners Association (ROA) felt exactly the same, and were determined to canvass both current and lapsed owners to find out their views, particularly in terms of what brings them into the sport, retains them and indeed drives them out of ownership. In this first blog on the subject I have done no more than list out the results from the survey. In the second part, on 1st September, I'll do my own analysis and draw conclusions on what I think the survey actually tells us.

Encouragingly there was a good sample size, with 2,203 responses including a number of "hard to reach" owner samples such as new owners with less than two years' ownership experience (255) and lapsed owners (203). Interesting to see that the average age of a racehorse owner is 59; the percentage of lapsed owners who cite facilities and treatment of owners at racecourses as a factor in their decision to give up ownership is 44%; the duration of ownership is longer for ROA members; the satisfaction rating of the ownership experience is higher for syndicate members than for sole owners; and the percentage of lapsed owners who would like to own horses again is 73%.

Theme 1: Owner Experience Results

1. 73% of racehorse owners started out with others.
2. Nearly one in four owners have taken a break, most due to finances or horse injury.
3. The most influential steps to ownership are speaking to a trainer or other owners.
4. New owners take more decision steps and are more likely to research online.
5. Ownership is born out of family history, keen interest in racing or attraction to the excitement.
6. New and syndicate owners think of the excitement above the expense.
7. Owners are not likely to recommend owning a racehorse to their friends.
8. Costs and prize-money are primary lapse reasons, racecourse and trainer experience crucial.
9. Three out of four lapsed owners would return to owning if the circumstances were right.
10. ROA members are much more likely to remain in ownership for longer.

Theme 2: Trainer Experience Results

1. The most influential steps to ownership are speaking to a trainer or other owners: 53% say that speaking to a trainer or visiting a yard is the key step, and for 22% it is speaking to other owners.
2. Owners want more information on costs and trainers: particularly on training fees, engagement and the owner experience, income and expenditure, and clear cost models so owners know what they are getting into.
3. Trainers are approachable but could communicate more information, more regularly.
4. Costs and prize-money are primary lapse reasons for 80% of lapsed owners; trainer experience (29%) is also crucial.

Theme 3: Racecourse Experience Results

1. The racecourse is the pinnacle of the ownership experience: the primary motivation to become an owner is the enjoyment of watching your horse run.
2. Racecourses are the shop window to ownership, not the salesmen: speaking to someone at a racecourse is not a crucial step in the decision to become a racehorse owner.
3. New owners are motivated more by the social aspects of racing: particularly with combined with the enjoyment of watching your horse run as well as the non-raceday social elements.
4. Winning is an important bonus, not the be-all and end-all: fewer than one in 12 owners believe that winning is everything.
5. Costs and prize-money are primary lapse reasons for 80% of lapsed owners; racecourse experience (44%) is also crucial.

In the second blog on the survey, the intention is to explore whether there may well be a “two factor” model working here. I know that sounds a bit jargony, but it could be that there are important differences between the factors that bring people into the sport and those that discourage them and ultimately may drive them out of the game. Thinking caps on to consider that hypothesis in more detail.

