



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

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THE BLOG**

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ROA National Racehorse Owners Survey – Part 2, Identifying the Key Factors in Acquisition & Retention

“A dual strategy is needed. One element examines acquiring new owners and that is closely linked to marketing and PR. Retaining owners is much more challenging because of the inevitable disappointments of ownership, high relative costs and dissatisfaction with the racecourse facilities.”

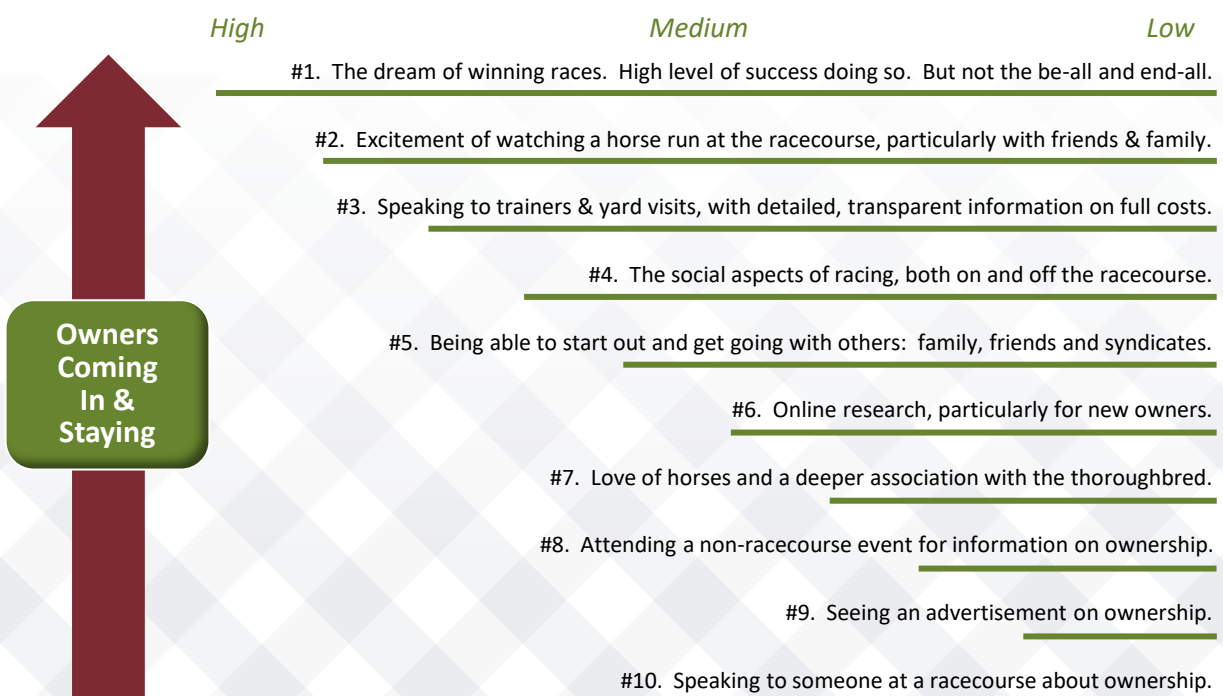
My wife and I were lucky enough to be at our favourite racecourse – York – to watch the Nunthorpe, won in devastating style by Mecca’s Angel. Such a tough horse, and a superb buy at only 16,000 guineas out of Book 2 Tattersalls October Yearling Sale in 2012. She is the first filly to win the Nunthorpe twice, and it was a delight to watch the turbo-chargers kick in as she scorched through the final furlong. David Metcalfe, the owner, was clearly delighted and the whole experience was everything that owners aspire to. In a rather less restrained celebration, the Here For The Craic partnership couldn’t believe their fortune when – every syndicate’s dream – Heartbreak City won the Ebor for Tony Martin. These results, and the York racecourse experience, sum up what brings owners into the game and keeps them there.

However the backdrop for the first National Racehorse Owners Survey is the ongoing decline in ownership since the financial crisis of 2008. Numbers coming in were lower than numbers going out in seven of the last eight years, although encouragingly there has started to be some improvement recently. The headline messages from the survey, of over 2,200 current and lapsed owners, include:

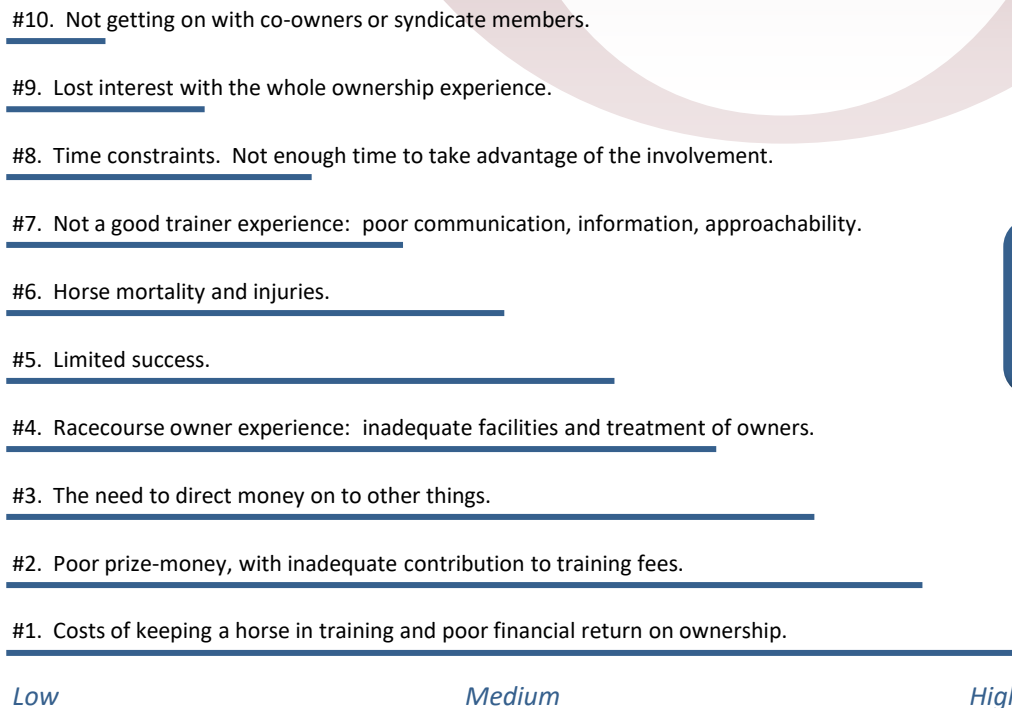
- 73% of owners start out with others, particularly friends, family or through a syndicate.
- 53% of owners say that speaking to a trainer or visiting a yard is the most influential step in their decision to own. However, 44% of owners say that there isn’t enough information available on costs, income or prize-money in the public domain to make that decision.
- 45% of current owners would increase their number of horses in training if prize-money increased.
- 44% of lapsed owners cite facilities and treatment of owners at racecourses as a key factor in their decision to give up ownership.
- Three out of four lapsed owners would return to owning if the circumstances were right.

The survey has been analysed under three main themes of the owner, the trainer and the racecourse experience. The more the results of the survey were examined, the more it became clear to us that the factors bringing owners into the sport are not necessarily the same as those that drive them out. This is illustrated in our diagram below, while drawing on the survey’s findings.

Top Ten Factors in Owner Acquisition



Top Ten Factors in Owner Termination



Owners
Cutting
Back &
Departing

Doubtless the analysis and conclusions from the survey will feed into the BHA's Strategy for Growth and all the operational planning associated with its implementation. Our recommendation is that in the light of the dual factor model outlined, there needs to be a similar dual strategy with different goals and interventions. Acquiring new owners is closely linked to marketing, PR and timely, detailed and transparent provision of information about ownership, particularly while potential owners are visiting trainers. Retaining owners is much more challenging because of the inevitable disappointments of ownership, the high relative costs and dissatisfaction with racecourse facilities. It is essential that the industry doesn't just concentrate on marketing and PR campaigns, but addresses properly the financial and experiential factors driving unnecessarily high owner churn rates. Indeed we would argue that this should be the prime strategic imperative of the BHA's Strategy for Growth.

