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Note underlined: No one else exports horses so whatever you sent back in the past is an accurate number*

RE: Statistics on horse imports to VI

Bethany Bradford

Reply

Mon 6/6

You

Inbox

You forwarded this message on 6/6/2016 8:08 PM

Good day,

I have had to go back and manually count from our monthly reports. I do not have accurate import stats from before 2010 so that is where the import number starts.

Number of imported horses to the VI

| | |
|------|----|
| 2010 | 79 |
| 2011 | 53 |
| 2012 | 76 |
| 2013 | 84 |
| 2014 | 74 |
| 2015 | 34 |
| 2016 | 14 |

*No one else exports horses so whatever you sent back in the past is an accurate number.

I hope this helps.

Bethany **Bradford**, DVM
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-----Original Message-----

From: Lynn [<mailto:utechvi@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2016 8:34 AM
To: Bethany **Bradford** <bethany.bradford@doa.vi.gov>
Subject: Statistics on horse imports to VI

Good Day Dr **Bradford**,

Per our recent talk we would like to receive numbers on the following:

1. Thoroughbreds imported to VI for racing during years 2004 to present
2. Subsequent Thoroughbreds exported from VI to States during years 2004 to present

TESTIMONY

June 12, 2016

Chairman Honorable Myron D. Jackson

Members of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Thank you for inviting the Island Horse Rescue Fund also described as the Virgin Islands Horse Rescue and Retirement organization the opportunity to submit information in regard to operating a welfare and adoption program for retired racehorses on island as we have been doing continuously every year since 2004.

Our sole mission is to provide, for racehorses brought to the territory, the best possible opportunity to live out their natural lives in a safe and humane environment through adoption.

We began in 2004 as VICCTRE and helped many horses from starvation on beaches and in the bush into new homes in Florida. These horses, without question, have always originated from our local racetracks. From the beginning, every transaction we have made on behalf of these horses has been in earnest cooperation with many of the original or secondary island owners of the horses or the Department of Agriculture - the sole governing body over livestock in the islands - particularly Dr. Bethany Bradford.

Our average count to ship horses to the States and into new adoptive homes has been since 2004 until 2015 – 6 horses per year.

The cost has changed little since the early days for the shipping process. A simple statement of those approximate costs for your records runs as such:

Barge to Puerto Rico for quarantine: \$250 per horse

Mandated Quarantine in Puerto Rico: \$750 per horse

Air cargo from Puerto Rico to Miami: \$2,000

There are many additional costs. Including payment for shipping broker, accompanying horse handler costs, laboratory fees for blood testing, local vet fees, and more.

The total cost to ship one horse to the States generally runs \$3,700. Ninety-nine percent of the time all costs end once the horses arrive to their farms in Florida,

whereby the foster care barn or accredited horse retirement farm will take on all costs and get the horse adopted to an individual. There has been - in the case of Meeses to Pieces - where during his stay at a foster care farm, our organization paid for hay costs at \$150/month for a few months.

In the middle of 2014, when the Horseman's Assistance Act monies were reduced for our organization, so that they may be shared with another, a delay occurred in sending horses that year as the new foster homes in Florida weren't yet secured and the cost of feed to keep them ate up the funds leaving very little for shipping. For the balance of the year and through most of 2015, we kept the 6 horses well cared for - we kept them in shoes, with vet care, free chiropractic and as well, free retraining by a short-term resident who carried professional horse-training credentials. In simple terms, rehabbing and retraining help a horse be more suited for adoption as the racehorse part of their lives gets conditioned out of them.

By November of 2015, however, enough private donations of \$18,000 were obtained to send all the horses to Florida at one time for rehoming. At no further, cost to our organization, two went to private foster care in Ocala and four went to FL-TRAC, a Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance-accredited farm outside Miami.

We are aware of two ex-racehorses needing retirement in this year of 2016 which have been presented to our organization for retirement. We currently have private funding in our account that matches the last quarter funding we received from the VI Lottery that could handle their shipment. This is in the planning stages which includes determining the best possible date to line up all the players in the process including the quarantine dates, the opening at the foster care in Florida, the barge schedule to Puerto Rico, etc.

Many of the track horseman, who I have developed strong and respectful relationships with over the years, are not ready to unload horses as they are awaiting news on the fate of horseracing in the territory, but will always be calling and willing to use our program as they have in the past when they are ready.

We have had to forfeit our property at the St. Thomas Dairies which we've utilized to rehab horses over the years, but the potential new promoters of the Clinton Phipps racetrack have verbally confirmed through their representative that at least one acre will be allotted to our program if we wish to continue the off-island adoption.

In light of this promise, we have decided to restructure our organization under a new name and with board members who have expressed deep interest in the continuance of horseracing and our racehorse welfare program.

We will continue to do our much-needed work with our own wind-in-our-sails as we have throughout most of our 11-year tenure; long before any government assistance.

However, we think it would speak very highly of this government to address the animal welfare issues plaguing the horseracing industry in a way that looks at the whole picture - from inside out - that would surely include support of a successful program like ours. To that, we hope that this Legislature looks very thoroughly at the many details of horse welfare and racehorse retirement in the territory.

Look at these figures provided to us by the VI Department of Agriculture recently:

In 2010 - 79 horses came into the territory. The following shows the number of horses entering the territory in the respective year.

| | | |
|------|---|-----------|
| 2011 | - | 53 horses |
| 2012 | | 76 horses |
| 2013 | - | 84 horses |
| 2014 | - | 74 horses |
| 2015 | - | 34 horses |
| 2016 | - | 14 horses |

The average time a horse spends at our St. Thomas track is 3 years. They come in at age 4-6 and leave at age 7-8 if they survive without breaking down during racing which could include leg breaks, bleeding lung and stomach twisting deaths usually caused by the stress of the sport not uncommon at any racetrack across America.

If the horse leaves the track and does not leave the island, what are the typical outcomes? Even if, using the figures stated, it's determined that all 53 of the horses from 2011 are retired and 25 of those went to private homes or retirement barns on island, where are the other 28 from that year? And the same for each year after. No private or non-profit entity, whether on St. Thomas or St. Croix, can ever sustain the number of horse retirements necessary for the horses that come here to race. Especially given the fact that horses in good health live well into their 20's and sometimes into their 30's. Simply take 25 horses from each of the years and you would have hundreds of horses retired here for the next 20 years plus the new ones coming into retirement each year after that. What happens to the horses that are not retired to an organized program? If we were to use the typical scenario once explained to me by the owners of No Nonsense Stables of St. Thomas it would look like this: of the 13 horses they have had since 2004, 5 of them went to the adoption program, three died of horse injuries or illness at the track or were euthanized and the last five were given to "friends" on St. Croix.

You will look further as an investigative government body reviewing the horseracing industry here and determine who those “friends” are and what does that mean exactly.

Often it means, the horse was left to survive on its own in the large swaths of land on St. Croix or the reclusive beaches of St. Thomas, particularly in Bordeaux.

If you were to look further, you would survey the beaches in Bordeaux and discover more than one skeleton and likely horses still alive trying to make it.

Over the years, no horseman wants to look at the issue of retirement too hard, or speak up for our organization, even though they treasure it, because not one wants the responsibility pointed back to them.

No government body has taken responsibility for control over animal welfare for horses at this level because it has always been easy to let the horses come into the territory, including government-financed purchases of horses to fill out the race card, and not worry about what happens after that because, apparently, no one noticed or cared before.

In 2004, with the start of our organization, that changed. We were repeatedly in the newspapers with accounts of desperate horses over the years found in bushes, behind hospitals, and even in the care of horseowners on land owned by Merchants Market. The Daily News will have all the records of this. Including of our program and our efforts to include children and interested adults. We can no longer share the horses with the public until we grow our program in that way again, but we can continue to get them off the island and back to the States where they came from. Into adoption programs that are still willing to take them, regardless of how many horses they have in the States already, because people want to help horses, period. These are well-bred, athletic animals, who have found good new careers through our efforts. We hope that this Legislature grows the local horse racing industry with welfare in mind.

And we would like to see the governing bodies who are in the business of horses, i.e. Department of Agriculture, helping to determine their fate. These things should not be decided solely by governmental departments or laypeople who do not know animal husbandry or the horse retirement business. A shiny barn does not a horse rescue make.

Thank you for your time,

Lynn Utech

Comment [lu1]: