

THE INTERNATIONAL STUD BOOK COMMITTEE

ASIAN RACING CONFERENCE 2016

Good afternoon everyone.

Thank you for inviting me here today.

As we confront challenges in Thoroughbred breeding and racing it is essential that the International Stud Book Committee works hand in hand with the world's Racing Authorities and Organisations.

The ISBC established and now governs standards of Stud Book operation to ensure the integrity of the Thoroughbred breed. This provides the foundation for a healthy international Thoroughbred industry. Helping the development of international – indeed intercontinental - racing over the past 40 years. Horseracing has become a truly **global** activity, with a wealth of top-class horses competing in prestigious races around the world. **And that** is only going to increase in the future.

The ISBC is a globally representative body, with members attending our 40th annual conference last year from **Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand and Africa**. There are 69

approved Stud Books around the world, producing 100,000 foals annually.

It fills me with some **personal** pride to reflect on **that**, as it was my ancestor, **James Weatherby**, who more than 200 years ago produced the **very first** Thoroughbred Stud Book with the primary objective, as he recorded at the time, being to: “*Rid the turf of the evil of **false and inaccurate** pedigrees*” He would never have believed the magnitude of what he started, but importantly, that founding principle is still valid today.

Since the ISBC was created, we have established global agreement for Conditions of Entry to Stud Books, unambiguously determining the definition of what a Thoroughbred actually is. Achieving this removed historic barriers to international bloodstock movement.

Now, as we look ahead, it is clear that one of the principal challenges we face could be to the **essence** of the Thoroughbred itself.

For more than two centuries, racehorses have been produced through a form of accelerated selection. We test the best of each generation in premier races around the world, identifying the herd leaders, and, as the old maxim goes, then breed from the best - and hope for the best!

However, we do reflect the overwhelming views of the industry in stipulating that there can be no artificiality in the Thoroughbred breeding process. No artificial insemination, no cloning, no embryo transfer. Recently, following discussion with the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities **and** the breeding industry, we have given the clear message that **any** manipulation of the heritable genome would result in the removal of Thoroughbred status. Thoroughbred production beats to Nature's drum.

This is not to resist change. One of the roles of the ISBC is to lead the Thoroughbred industry in evaluating new scientific developments. We introduced **blood-typing** in 1986 and in 2001, **DNA testing**, to verify foal parentage. Science working in partnership with our needs.

Recent scientific advances in animal breeding have delivered new technologies, providing a deeper genetic understanding of many species, and which **could** provide opportunity to further improve the Thoroughbred - **eradicating weaknesses; amplifying strengths**. But the science, particularly for equines, is new. The industry must be properly informed to ensure that science is applied **only** in the **best** interests of the breed.

The Thoroughbred is, in fact, **only** about **35 generations** into its development. Unproven or unwise decisions on breeding, **however** well intentioned, could disrupt or destroy in a generation what breeders have developed over almost **300 years**.

Weatherbys is at the forefront of scientific advance. For 30 years, we have had our own DNA testing laboratory in Ireland where, in addition to Thoroughbreds, we are now handling the largest beef cattle genotyping project in the world, as well as projects for sheep, dogs, goats and other equines. The knowledge gained will, of course, be shared with the International Stud Book Committee, ensuring that we protect the vital integrity of the Thoroughbred. **Worldwide.**

We must work tirelessly to ensure that whatever country suffix a Thoroughbred racehorse carries, everyone knows that its identity is **guaranteed**. The future will bring even more international trading and racing of bloodstock and more nations involved in breeding. The ISBC will support, nurture and regulate to the highest standards. To that end, the Members of the ISBC agreed in December last year that **all** Approved Stud Books sign up to a new Declaration of Compliance.

This gives **absolute clarity** on what is required of Approved Stud Books and establishes **certainty** on sanctions for **non-compliance**. The ISBC

will be rigorous in both inspection and enforcement, with appropriate dedicated resource in the form of an **International Compliance Officer** allocated to this important work. Any Stud Book failing to comply with internationally-agreed standards and procedures **will** have its status **revoked**. In that event, no horses from that Stud Book region can be exported or race overseas until the ISBC is satisfied that full compliance has been achieved.

The foundations for the International Thoroughbred breeding and racing industries **must** - without **exception** - be of the highest integrity. We owe that to the Breeders and to the Racing Authorities. We owe that to the Thoroughbred horse itself.

The International Stud Book Committee is a key organisation – deeply knowledgeable, internationally respected, and with the best interests of the Thoroughbred as its absolute priority. That must never change.

Thank you.