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Dear Fiona,

Thank you for your email of 23 November on behalf of one of your constituents about the use of the whip in horse racing. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA), racing's governing and regulatory body, requires that whips must be used responsibly. Irresponsible use of the whip is completely unacceptable. The BHA's whip policy was drawn up in consultation with animal welfare groups, such as the RSPCA.

In March 2012, the BHA revised its rules for use of the whip and they now include a threshold on the number of times the whip is used before racing stewards can consider an enquiry and impose fines and suspensions.

In March this year the BHA reviewed the situation and reported figures showing that whip offences are down by almost 40% compared to 2011 under the old rules.

Thank you again for your email.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs