

BROKEN HILL VETERINARY CLINIC

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To whom it may concern,

I am a veterinarian in private practice in a N.S.W. country town. As such I treat small animals, horses, cattle, sheep, native animals and exotic animals including circus performers. As well as this I am responsible for animal welfare, veterinary care and drug swabbing at the local pony club, harness racing, greyhound and flat racing meetings. For various reasons I and my Clinic at present refuse to be involved with any rodeo performances.

While undertaking my responsibilities at the Broken Hill Harness Racing Club meeting of the 9th January 1999 I had the opportunity to view the Vincent Silvestro "Hot to Trot" act. I had a close look at horse used that evening ('Like an Angel') before the performance, while being hitched up to the sulky, and during the performance. At all times before the act the horse was quiet and calm— unlike many pony club or race horses with often show marked signs of excitement or stress before an event. During hitching up the horse showed no signs of intractability, fear or apprehension of what it had to be aware of what was to immediately follow. While running a few introductory laps the horse had its head turned a little to the right, towards the crowds.

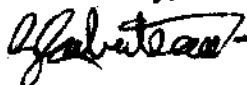
When Mr Silvestro climbed onto the sulky shafts and gripped the reins with his teeth the horse did not react untowardly at all. For the whole performance, which had obviously great amounts of fiery lights and sudden gunshot-like noises, the horse seemed at all times to be quite calm and collected. [On the other hand some of the horses that were stabled 50 to 100 metres away did need their handlers to keep them calm during the event even though these horses had no direct view of the event.]

After the event 'Like an Angel' did not seem significantly more distressed than I would expect for a horse that had run that distance at that speed.

After viewing the act and with my knowledge and experience of how horses react to unpleasant or stressful stimuli I believe, that when performed competently, it does not causes any undue or unacceptable stress to the animal. Obviously prerequisites include the choice of horses with the right temperament, adequate training and conditioning to act properly and safely under the required conditions, and a complete trust between man and animal. But realistically that is what all training of all animals for all tasks should be anyway. I do not believe that such a potentially dangerous precision act could occur if the horse were under undue stress and did not have complete confidence in the driver.

In my opinion Mr Silvestro and his horse perform a high quality act during which respect for the horse's welfare, both physical and mental, has been adequately addressed.

Yours sincerely,



Guillaume Tabuteau B.V.Sc.