



Thoroughbred Traceability: Synthesis of Findings

Overview

About 48% of each foal crop has no recorded whereabouts in the available data. For horses that race, the transition out of racing is a particularly notable point at which visibility may be lost. The gap is mostly a reporting problem, not a welfare crisis. Because risk concentrates in specific tracks, race types and horse profiles, we can now target the roughly 6,000 active horses most likely to disappear before they leave racing.

This synthesis combines two studies: Dr. Jill Stowe's final Traceability Study (September 2026, 2008–2023 foal crops) and the TJC Technology Services risk-model analysis (TJC Dataset) (June 2026, 2008–2025 crops).

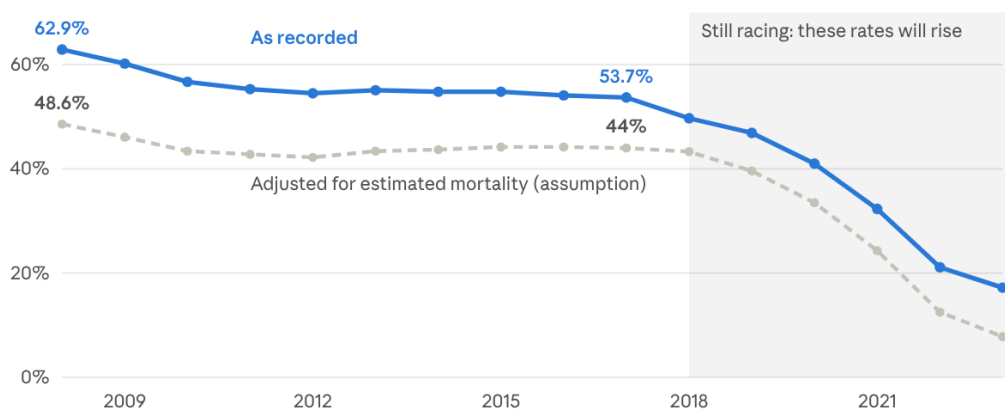
The two analyses together cover more than 400,000 registered Thoroughbreds across the 2008–2025 foal crops, with the Stowe study examining 376,258 horses from the 2008–2023 crops that are of racing age. The Stowe analysis shows that roughly 17,000 horses leave racing each year, and about 8,800, or just over half, have no further record. The reporting gap also extends beyond racing, with a substantial share of broodmares having no recorded whereabouts after their breeding careers end.

The size of the gap

On average 48% of each foal crop has no recorded whereabouts; this estimate can be reduced to about 38% by applying an expected mortality adjustment. That adjustment is an assumption: it applies USDA equine mortality rates by age, since owners are not required to report every change in status, such as deaths. Crops old enough to have finished racing sit higher at 54–63%.

Mature foal crops settle at 54–63% with no recorded whereabouts

% of each foal crop with no record, by year of birth



Stowe, *Traceability Study* (Sept 2026), Tables 1 and 3 · 2008–2023 foal crops

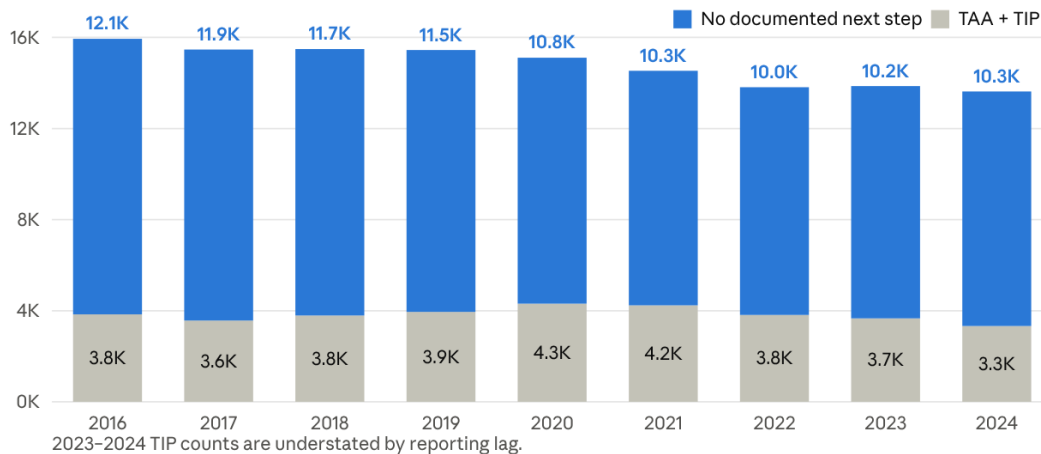


Where the gap opens

The last reliable touchpoint for most horses is their racing connections. Once a horse leaves racing, about half leave no further record, and organized aftercare (Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (TAA) organizations intake plus The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program (T.I.P.) placements) absorbs roughly a quarter of exits.

About 10,000 horses a year leave racing with no documented next step

Horses exiting racing each year, split by whether TAA or TIP absorbed them



TJC Dataset (June 2026), placement gap table · exits exclude horses that died or were exported

Broodmares are a second, smaller leak. Of 28,869 horses that left breeding at least three years ago, 75% are unaccounted. The highest-risk mare never raced, never went through a sale and produced few foals; about 13,000 mares fit that profile. A mare with at least one auction sale is 20% less likely to be unaccounted (66% vs. 86%).

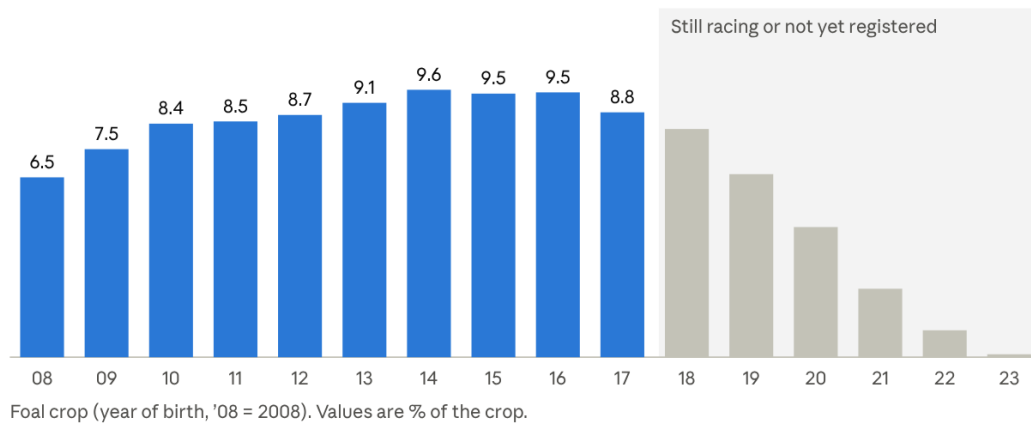
T.I.P.: our biggest window into second careers

T.I.P. is the largest record we have of what retired racehorses do next. About 26,600 horses from the 2008–2023 crops hold a T.I.P. number, and the program's reach has grown since it launched in 2012.



TIP's reach grew from 6.5% of the 2008 crop to ~9.5% of the 2014–2016 crops

% of each foal crop holding a TIP number · 26,604 horses across 2008–2023 crops



Stowe *Traceability Study* (Sept 2026), Table 1, T.I.P. # column · 2008–2023 foal crops

T.I.P. adds about 2,000 new retired racehorses a year (2016–2021 average) and constitutes about 43–57% of all documented placements each year. Recent crops have lower transition rates because it typically takes some time for horses to be registered with T.I.P. once they retire. A T.I.P. number means a horse is registered for second-career competition or recognition; it does not always mean a formal placement. Even so, T.I.P. and TAA together reach about 3,300–4,300 of the roughly 14,000 horses leaving racing each year, so growing T.I.P. is one of the most direct levers we (The Jockey Club) control.

T.I.P. is not the only source of second-career information. Other programs and initiatives, including TAA facility intake, the Traceability Survey, the Retired Racehorse Project Thoroughbred Makeover, and California's CARMA program, also contribute records that help provide visibility into horses after racing.

Second-career record, 2008–2023 crops	Horses	Share of these records
Registered for T.I.P. number	26,604	64%
TAA facility intake	10,736	26%
TJC Traceability Survey	2,399	6%
RRP Thoroughbred Makeover registration	1,581	4%
CARMA intake	144	<1%

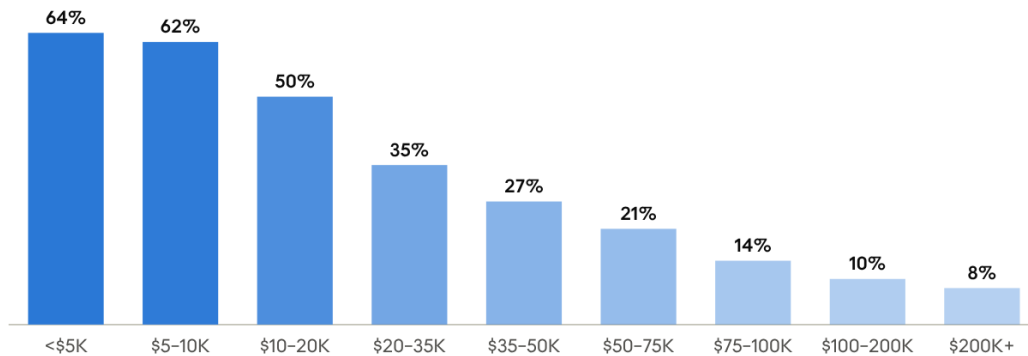


What predicts a horse's becoming unaccounted

Using purse level at last start as a proxy, a horse's commercial value is the strongest signal of recorded whereabouts after racing. The lower the purse level of a horse's last start the less likely anyone keeps its record current.

A horse last racing for under \$10K is ~8× as likely to be unaccounted as a \$200K+ horse

% unaccounted by purse of the horse's last race



TJC Dataset (June 2026), risk factors by purse level · horses 2+ years past last start

The risk of becoming unaccounted for is not evenly distributed. Both analyses identified characteristics associated with a higher or lower likelihood that a horse will have a subsequent traceability touchpoint, providing a way to focus outreach where it may have the greatest impact.

Factor	Higher risk	Lower risk	Source
Last race type	Maiden claiming: 64% no record	Stakes: 22%	Stowe
Sex	Males: 66% (geldings 2.0× the odds)	Females: 43%	Stowe; TJC Dataset
Age at last start	Age 10+: 68% or more	Age 3–4: 52–53%	Stowe
Track regulation	Non-HISA track: 62% unaccounted	HISA track: 54% (0.83× odds after controls)	TJC Dataset
Claimed at last start	Unclaimed in a claiming race	Claimed: 58% lower odds	TJC Dataset
Sire	Non-commercial sire	Sire with 100+ foals: 49% lower odds	TJC Dataset



These factors rank risk well but do not decide any single horse's fate. Stowe's model explains about 11% of the variation; TJC Dataset racing model separates the lowest- and highest-risk fifths at 21% vs. 79% (AUC 0.742). These factors should be used to target outreach.

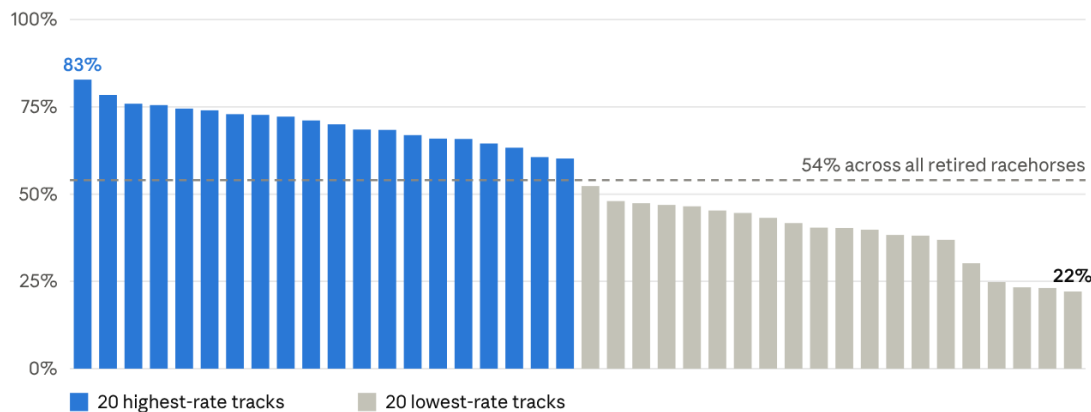
Applying the factors to the current racing population identifies an actionable group: 6,134 active horses at 55 tracks currently fall into the highest-risk category for becoming unaccounted for.

Where it concentrates

Twenty tracks account for 57% of all horses with no record after racing, so a small number of venues is where outreach will pay off most.

Where a horse makes its last start matters: 22% to 83% leave no record

% of horses with no record after racing, 40 large tracks (1,000+ last starts) ranked high to low



Stowe *Traceability Analysis* (Sept 2026), Tables 11a and 11b · the 20 highest- and 20 lowest-rate tracks with 1,000+ last starts; track names withheld

Volume and rate tell different stories. Some large tracks have many untraced horses simply because they run so many starters, yet their rates are below average. The highest rates sit at smaller, claiming-heavy, lower-purse venues, most of them outside Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) coverage. At the state level, horses finishing in New York, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware are the most likely to stay on the record after controlling for other factors.

A reporting gap, not necessarily a welfare gap

When The Jockey Club asked last-known owners directly through the digital certificate prompt survey, 92% could give a status for their horse. The information exists; it simply does not reach the registry.



Digital Certificate Prompt Survey response (3,430 total)	Count	Share
Still in possession	1,293	38%
Sold or transferred, non-racing	1,256	37%
No longer living	600	17%
Sold or transferred, racing or breeding	159	5%
Declined to answer	112	3%

The addition of prompts for inactive digital certificates also changed behavior: 7,480 horses showed certificate activity after a certificate prompt went out. Because reporting status changes are voluntary, easier reporting tools are likely to close more of the gap than added capacity alone.

Where we go from here

The analyses point to a horse's final start as a critical opportunity for intervention, before the traceability gap opens. They also show that risk is concentrated among certain horses and at certain locations, allowing outreach and resources to be more targeted. Recommended actions from both studies include:

1. **Use the risk model to guide outreach.** Apply the model after each start to identify horses at higher risk of becoming unaccounted for and use that information to prioritize follow-up with connections after horses stop appearing in racing records.
2. **Focus outreach where the data shows the greatest opportunity.** Begin with tracks and racing populations that account for the largest numbers of horses without subsequent records, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach.
3. **Strengthen the connection to existing aftercare and second-career resources.** Use identified risk factors, including claiming status and sex, to determine when connections may benefit from information about T.I.P., accredited aftercare organizations, and other transition resources.
4. **Make status reporting easier.** Expand the digital certificate prompts that have already generated additional reporting and explore regular email or text reminders that make it simple for owners to report retirement, transfer, death, or other changes in status.
5. **Use targeted partnerships at the track level.** Work with tracks and industry organizations in areas where the data shows higher numbers or rates of horses becoming unaccounted for to improve transition reporting and connect horsemen with available resources, including aftercare liaisons.
6. **Better understand horses that never enter the racing record.** Review the approximately 47,000 horses identified in the analysis that never entered racing to determine what additional information may already exist and where reporting gaps begin.
7. **Continue improving the model.** Identify and incorporate additional data sources and reassess the model as additional traceability information becomes available.



Baselines for the annual update:

These measures provide a 2026 baseline for tracking progress and identifying changes in traceability over time.

Metric	2026 baseline	Source
Share of each foal crop with no record	48% (38% adjusted)	Stowe
Racing exits with no record, per year	~8,800 (about 52%)	Stowe
Exits absorbed by TAA + T.I.P., per year	~3,300–4,300	TJC Dataset
HISA vs. non-HISA unaccounted rate	54% vs. 62%	TJC Dataset
Owners able to report status when asked	92%	TJC Dataset
Active horses in highest-risk group	6,134	TJC Dataset

Sources

- C. Jill Stowe, *The Jockey Club Traceability Study*, 13 September 2026 (2008–2023 foal crops).
- TJC Dataset, TJC Technology Services, 9 June 2026.