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Bloodstock desk: Nearly 40 per cent of two-year-olds in training do not make the racecourse, and of those that do, less than a third win a race . . .

150% of all fillies in training were retired to stud by end of 3yo season 176% had been in race training 172% had never won a race 138% had never run in a race

Published: 15/12/2005 (News) Pachel Pagones & Amy Bennett

. . . these are the findings of a Levy Board-sponsored study on wastage in training conducted by Professor Twink Allen and Sandra Wilsher of the Equine Fertility Unit in Newmarket, writes Rachel Pagones. The chances improve for three-year-olds kept in training, with just over three-quarters of them going under starters' orders and 40 per cent of those winning at least one race. However, in terms of recouping training costs, the picture is less rosy; using a conservative estimate of £10,000 annual keep, the researchers found that just five per cent of two-year-olds and 17 per cent of three-year-olds covered their costs. In research presented at the thoroughbred racing and breeding seminar at Cheltenham racecourse last month, Allen and Wilsher followed the careers of 1,022 foals conceived in the Newmarket area in 1998, tracking them through to the end of their three-year-old season in 2002. The foals were identified from a breeding efficiency study involving 1,369 mares from 25 studs in the region. None of the major studs was excluded. A total of 592, or 58 per cent, of the foals were sold at public auction: 113 of them as foals, 390 as yearlings and 89 as two-year-olds, for prices ranging from 500gns to 320,000gns. (Just one horse, incidentally, earned as much as the top sale price; the highest earner in the study, a three-year-old, won £324,029.) Just over half of the foals in the study (537) entered training in Britain or Ireland at two, comprising about equal numbers of colts and fillies. Another 28 per cent were exported, while smaller numbers died, were put aside for jump or three-year-old careers, were taken out of racing or were not traceable. Of the two-year-olds who went into training, 61 per cent made the racecourse. The mean number of runs for those horses was 3.2, and the mean prize-money won was £2,646. Injuries were also tracked through questionnaires sent to trainers. Sore shins was by far the most widespread ailment among two-year-olds, with 29 per cent reportedly suffering the injury. Non-specific respiratory disease, joint problems and fractures also had a greater than ten per cent frequency among the juveniles. Twice as many fractures were reported for two-year-old fillies as for colts. However, among three-year-olds, colts suffered the majority of fractures. The scientists do not have an explanation, although Wilsher speculated that it may be linked to hormone levels. In all, 62 per cent of two-year-olds were reported to have at least one veterinary problem. Three-year-olds proved tougher, with their trainers reporting just 50 per cent to have suffered an ailment and 76 per cent running in at least one race. The mean number of runs for these horses was 5.3, with a mean prize-money level of £7,378. By the end of 2002, the study had 562 horses on its radar. Just one-third of those remained in Flat-race training in Britain or Ireland as four-year-olds. More than a quarter of them, nearly all fillies, were retired to stud. Indeed, 50 per cent of all fillies in training were retired by the end of their three-year-old seasons. Of those, 72 per cent were non-winners and 38 per cent had never run a race. The research found no significant differences in terms of number of races run or won, prize-money earned

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