**dogger**

- **noun:** a person who buys horses for slaughter and processing.

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**THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH**

At the 2013 Melbourne Cup one of the horses, Verema, was injured and had to be euthanised. A news article on the tragedy explained why a broken leg resulted in death for the horse, and also generally discussed other aspects of the horse racing industry that are not widely known. The writer made the following comment: ‘It is estimated that of the 18,000 thoroughbred foals born each year in Australia, an average of 12,600 will be ruthlessly discarded and mostly end up at “the doggers”.’ (Melbourne Herald Sun, 6 November 2013)

**Dogger** is a colloquial term that has been in use in Australia for some time, referring to a person who sells horses to the knackery where they are slaughtered and processed, often for pet food. An equivalent American English term is **canner**.

The term **dogger** is also used attributively. Across Australia every year many horses, including thoroughbred horses, are sold at what are sometimes called **dogger sales**. The horses sold at these horse auctions are often referred to as **dogger horses**. A Hobart Mercury advertisement informed the public: ‘The **dogger horse** sale will commence in the saleyards at 10am. Ms Falzon said entry fee to the sale would be $5 for **dogger horses**.’ (13 September 2012)

The horses are killed for pet food—hence the development of the term **dogger** from the idea of the horse being used for dog food—but the meat is also exported for human consumption overseas. The treatment of the horses prior to their slaughter has been a cause for major concern on the part of animal welfare groups. Equine rescue groups have tried to raise awareness of the fate of such horses:

Ex-racehorse Harry and his brother Sam are two horses fortunate enough to escape the ‘**dogger’s truck**’ and now live a happy life in a paddock at Tracey Schofield’s home in Bexhill. The horses found their new home with the help of East Coast Horse Rescue (ECHR), an organisation formed two years ago by a group of concerned locals who were appalled at the number of neglected and mistreated horses in the Northern Rivers region. (Northern Rivers Echo, 28 February 2013)

Some people who work in the industry consider the term **dogger** offensive. Lee Marsham has spent most of his working life in the industry:
Just don’t call him a ‘dogger’. The term is Australian vernacular—with a strong derogatory undertone—for someone who buys horses to be slaughtered at a knackery, primarily for dog food. ‘I don’t like the name dogger, because I’m not a dogger’, Marsham says. ... ‘Everything goes to the meatworks for human consumption.’ *(Adelaide Now, 25 December 2010)*

Australia exported two million kilograms of horsemeat to Europe for human consumption in 2012, making it a significant part of Australian trade.

**Dogger** will be included in the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. 

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