

Emaciated mare and foal 'dumped to die'



An emaciated foal abandoned on the road between Carrick and Clonmel last week. | Photo: Courtesy of Waterford Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The Waterford Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (WSPCA) has reiterated its calls for a complete ban on 'sulkie' racing, following the discovery of an emaciated mare and foal abandoned in a field between Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel last week.

The Society was called to the field last Thursday, following reports that the two animals had been left to die in awful conditions.

Welfare officers discovered that the foal, which was about a year old, had sustained a bad gash, most likely after crashing into an object or falling while being raced.

The animal was unable to stand and was close to death. Its coat had been completely shaved off to stop it from succumbing to overheating while being forced to race on roads. It had spent the night in freezing conditions and animal welfare officers say it is a miracle it survived.

Hypothermia would undoubtedly have set in if the foal had suffered another night in the field, according to WSPCA President Barbara Bent.

"This poor little guy was in a horrendous condition, it was honestly one of the worst cases we've seen in a long time. He is covered in cuts, bruises and horse bites, he had obviously been mistreated for some time. He was lame in front and behind and one hoof is so damaged that we're fearful it could come off."

The mare, a thoroughbred, had also been badly treated and the foal was still suckling off her. The two animals are now in the safe care of a friend of the WSPCA. The mother is doing well and both she and her foal are undergoing intensive care, Ms Bent said, in the hope of them making a proper recovery.

The WSPCA is receiving up to four or five calls a week about abused and abandoned sulkie ponies in the region and Ms Bent said this appalling level of cruelty to horses and ponies was often taking place in the public eye, on main roads. She's called for urgent action to ban sulkie racing completely.