

In Ancient Rome, people went to the colosseum to watch animals die as an entertainment spectacle. In Spain, people go to bullfights. In Australia, Victorians and South Australians go to jumps racing.



A dead jumps horse lies at the back of the Warrnambool racecourse in Victoria after breaking his neck

A 15 year study into catastrophic injuries in flat and jumps racehorses (between 1989 – 2004) was conducted by Dr Lisa Boden and presented at the International Symposium for the Prevention of Thoroughbred Racehorse Fatalities and Injuries in July 2005.

Fatalities:        Jump horses: one death for every 115 horses that start in a race  
                     Flat horses:  one death for every 2150 horses that start in a race

Catastrophic limb injuries:  18 times more likely in jump races than in flat races

Cranial (head) or vertebral (back and neck) injuries:  121 times more likely in jump races than flat races

Sudden death 3.5 times more likely in jump races (most sudden deaths attributed to catastrophic cardiovascular or respiratory failure)

These statistics provide clear evidence that jumps horses are pushed far beyond their normal limits, and are subjected to much greater physical, psychological and physiological stress than flat racehorses. Jumps horses are forced to experience the frightening ordeal of jumping over fixed obstacles for long distances, at speed and when fatigued, which interferes with their limb co-ordination.

Is jumps racing the saddest form of animal entertainment on earth?



*Spanish Symbol*, winner of the Hiskens Steeplechase in 2007, lies dead at Moonee Valley after competing in the same race in 2008 in which he fell and sustained a catastrophic limb injury following a fall resulting in him being euthanased.

**Moonee Valley, the valley of death for jumps horses - where evil preys on innocence**

*Whatsourgo* lay on the track with a broken shoulder unable to get to his feet after falling at Moonee Valley, 2009. Horses are prey animals who are extremely cautious and vigilant about their safety. They are terrified of falling because of their innate consciousness of being eaten by a predator once they are lying on the ground.

*Geeorb* crashed to the ground and broke his shoulder. He attempted to run from the scene with his broken shoulder but, highly distressed, was caught and eventually euthanased - Moonee Valley, 2009

“Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages”

(Thomas Jefferson, 3<sup>rd</sup> US President)



Three horses died in 3 days at the Warrnambool jumps carnival in May, *Pride of Westbury*, *Hassle* and *Clearview Bay* but the Victorian Government agreed with the decision by Racing Victoria Limited to continue the jumps racing season. Horses who are killed and injured in jumps racing is therefore government sanctioned animal cruelty. When the front end of the horse fails to support him, many horses hit the ground head first. In this instance, *Pride of Westbury* smashes his head into the ground and breaks his neck.

No animal being used by humans for either food or entertainment should experience the level of stress, injury, suffering and fear that jumps racing inflicts on horses

Horses are prey animals whose safety is paramount to them at all times. Jumps horses are not willing participants in the extremely dangerous sport of jumps racing, which constantly challenges their physical ability to retain stability while galloping and jumping over fixed obstacles at speed and whilst fatigued.



*Weeping Willow* loses his stability and stumbles badly at the last jump on 1st March 2009 at Pakenham. After the race he was found to be lame and was subsequently retired.

“I am an advocate for the horse. Given the grief to which horses are subjected by man, I think it is clear that the animal needs advocates”  
(Dr James Rooney – leading horse scientist and author *The Lame Horse*)

In 2008 *Crying Storm* broke his shoulder and appeared to be in agony trying to support his body on broken limbs as he waited to be euthanased by the attending veterinarian.

Placing fixed obstacles in front of horses travelling at 40 – 60 kph knowing that one in 20 starters in a jumps race will fall, constitutes “institutionalized cruelty”



After leading all the way in a jumps race at Hamilton, in country Victoria, **Hanging Rock**, in a state of fatigue, fails dismally in his attempt to jump the last obstacle.

Dignity belongs to all. It is not our place to remove it by our cruelty, our neglect or our stupidity. Man may chose his path but these innocents cannot. We have a responsibility to act on their behalf and prove ourselves all the more dignified by our acts of compassion. May all those who do nothing carry the results of their inaction on their consciences for all time. —Julia Walker (horse advocate)

With his forelimb broken at the elbow and swinging backwards and forwards, a distressed **Hanging Rock** still managed to run on three legs along the straight in search of safety. He was finally caught and euthanased behind a green screen to shield his execution from the public, which included children on the charity race day for victims of the Victorian fires.

“If only the people knew the pain the animals go through, the cruelty that is inflicted on sentient animals, they would take action. We should all be upset because it was when we got upset about slaves that something happened about slaves. It was when we got upset about Aboriginal rights that something happened about Aboriginal rights. Being upset is the beginning of the journey to solutions.” (Justice Michael Kirby author of the first **Animal Law Textbook, Animal Law in Australasia**)

Horses also fell at official jumps trials, suffering injuries, lameness and catastrophic injuries which result in death. Two horses who are known to have died in jumps trials in the 2009 jumps season are **Shrogginet** and **Dark Disguise**.

The Australian racing industry should show some moral leadership and put the whip to rest. Of course there is a place in our community for the

horse whip. It belongs alongside the school strap in the museum as an example of past brutality. (Mirko Bagaric – Professor of Law and Head of Deakin Law School)

“If whipping exhausted horses coming 11<sup>th</sup> and beaten mentally and physically is a sport, we need to be utterly ashamed as a community. It is cruelty on a massive scale and Australians should be ashamed that we have not ordered this barbarism to stop years ago.”  
(Patrick Smith, Senior Journalist, The Australian)

Scientists statements that confirm that horses did not evolve to be jumping animals...

*‘There is a common misconception that the horse is a natural jumper, possessed of a flexible and supple body capable of maintaining balance at all gaits and speeds. The reality is very different. In fact, of all athletic animals, the horse has been provided with a very inflexible carcass of great bulk and weight... apart from the trunk providing anchorage for muscles responsible for limb movement, its weight is a serious handicap to rapid and flexible progression, like a motor car with a very heavy chassis’<sup>1</sup>*

Horses are prey animals and are therefore extremely cautious about their safety. Their safety is paramount to them at all times. Losing their stability and falling is terrifying for them. Despite experiencing a nasty fall, this horse continued to jump riderless. Horses often jump any obstacle in their path as they follow the other horses, because they instinctively know their safety is with the herd.

*“A social herbivore that capitalizes on companions for added safety, mutual comfort and enhanced detection of food, this is a creature that is likely to feel insecure when isolated.”<sup>2</sup>*



Laterally placed eyes impairs forward vision

Inflexible spine makes it difficult to compensate for jumping errors

Long limbs become very extended when galloping at speed making it difficult to adjust their stride

Very heavy carcass ribcage encases 130 kilos of organs, intestines etc.

Horses are renowned for their noble character and obedience which makes them easy to train. Momentum is the product of mass x velocity. The combined mass (bodyweight of jumps horse and jockey) is approx 520 – 670 kgs which creates a huge momentum when galloping at speeds of up to 60 kph and a living projectile when the horse is in the air.

As a result, unlike showjumping horses who compete at very slow speeds, jumps horses do not have the option to refuse a jump if their approach is incorrect. Some jumps horses crash into obstacles (such as the wings of the jump) whilst trying to evade jumping a fence.

**Horses jump because they have been trained to do so.**

*“Unless trained to jump, horses generally avoid ditches and horizontal obstacles”<sup>2</sup>*

**Horses have poor forward vision.** *“The laterally placed eyes of a horse means that the muzzle obstructs forward vision. Depending on the carriage of the head, the particular breed and the setting of the eyes, there is a blind zone extending almost 2 metres directly in front of the horse”.*<sup>2</sup>

**The degree of elasticity in the musculo-skeletal tissues and feet of horses has enabled them to be trained to jump.** *“The tendons and ligaments of the horse’s limbs make extensive use of elastic recoil-elastic tissue that stretches when a tensile force is applied and recoils when tension is released. Elastic energy is stored as each limb is loaded then released when the limb is unloaded. These spring-like functions are particularly relevant to the jumping horse.”*<sup>3</sup>

***Bibliography:***

1. (Smythe and Goody, Horse Structure and Movement, Third Edition, J.A. Allen, London 1993)
2. (Dr Paul McGreevy, Equine Behavior, (A guide for Veterinarians and Equine Scientists, W.B.Saunders, 2004).
3. Hilary M. Clayton, (BVMS, PhD, MRCVS) The Dynamic Horse, Sporthorse Publications (undated)
4. Chris Hyland, trainer of jumps horses
5. Jennifer Lugton, What makes thoroughbreds fall head over heels? Welfare concerns associated with steeplechase racing (VEIN, Animal Welfare Science Essays)
6. Willem Back, Hilary Clayton, Equine Locomotion, W.B. Saunders, 2001.

**Additional scientific information:**

**Major statements by Flinders University from the Judge Jones Review into Jumps Racing, 2008**

*“Jumps racing remains an activity exposing horses and riders to significant risks of harm*

*This is underscored by the prominent episodes that occurred during 2008. It remains moot whether it is practicable to achieve a level of safety in this activity that is acceptable to participants and the community.”*

*“The sharp rise in the number of horses killed or euthanized during the 2001/2002 season from 9 in the previous year to 14 showed that despite measures to improve safety the rates of fatalities and injuries to horses continued to be a major concern.”*

*“The majority of horses fall in the second half of the races. The majority of horse deaths occur in the middle and closing stages of both hurdle and steeplechase races.”*

*“Most horses have a short career in jumps racing. Half run in 5 or fewer races and only 11% run in more than 20.”*

**Dr Paul McGreevy’s study into the relationship between the length of nose and eyesight in horses:**

*Dr McGreevy’s study into how ganglion cell distribution in the equine retina influences the visual field found that horses with longer heads and more especially those with long nasal lengths had more ganglion cells in their visual streak. The ability to detect detail in the visual streak varies amongst individual horses. This means that some horses with the highest value may have been able to see at 30m what the horse with the lowest value could see only at 20m. Dr McGreevy found that standardbreds can detect more detail than thoroughbreds and thoroughbreds more than Arabians. (Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Equitation Science Symposium 2005, Melbourne, Australia)*