



Increase in race horse deaths recorded by Animal Aid Race Horse Deathwatch Review 2017

Animal Aid was able to find out about 159* horses who died as a result of racing on British racecourses in 2017. Each horse's details can be viewed on Animal Aid's searchable website: www.horsedeathwatch.com

The premature loss of 159 horses is strikingly disturbing. It also falls well above the 2016 Deathwatch figure of 136. This rise should be of major concern to the racing industry, its associates and, most importantly, the horse welfare regulator, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA).

Of the 159 horse deaths, 123 (77%) were linked to National Hunt (NH or jump) racing. Catastrophic injuries included broken necks, spinal and pelvic injuries, and limb fractures. Other causes of death involved damaged tendons, and pulmonary haemorrhages (heart attacks).

In flat racing, the majority of victims were killed as a result of 'breaking down' with an injury on the course. Starting Stall incidents also contributed to the deaths. On two separate occasions, a horse broke loose from the stalls wearing a blindfold. Both animals sustained severe injuries running loose and had to be destroyed.

Each of the 159 victims has their own sad story. And during 2017 Animal Aid was able to publicise a large number of them, revealing the fate of horses who suffered unacceptably in the most horrific circumstances.

Two racecourses, shamefully, stood out above all of the others. Heading the list of Britain's 60 racecourses in the sheer number of fatalities was Cheltenham with 12 deaths, followed by Southwell National Hunt (jumps) course with 8 deaths, as well as another victim on Southwell's flat racing All-Weather surface. For the past three years these two racecourses have topped the league of the most race horse deaths in Britain.

This highlights an alarming and systemic problem that the industry has failed to resolve. There is little or no evidence to show that the tide of deaths will in future years decrease. We believe that apathy and arrogance is at the heart of this. Whilst horse welfare is in the hands of the BHA, it will remain 'business as usual' with a conveyor belt of horses exploited at will. And, deplorably, there is little or nothing to safeguard horses under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act whilst they are in the process of 'racing'. If unchallenged, this will continue, and horses will pay with their lives.

*It is likely that a larger number of horses will have fallen victim, as many deaths will have been kept out of the public domain.