



INJURIES AND FATAL INJURIES TO RACEHORSES

The BHA is the Government recognised body responsible for the regulation of horseracing. British Racing is among the world's best-regulated animal activities and the BHA works closely and openly with Government and the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare to ensure that the standards demanded of all licensed participants, including jockeys and trainers, by far exceed those prescribed by animal welfare legislation.

The sport employs around 6,500 people to provide first class care and attention for the 14,000 horses in training, providing them with a level of care and a quality of life that is virtually unsurpassed by any other domesticated animal.

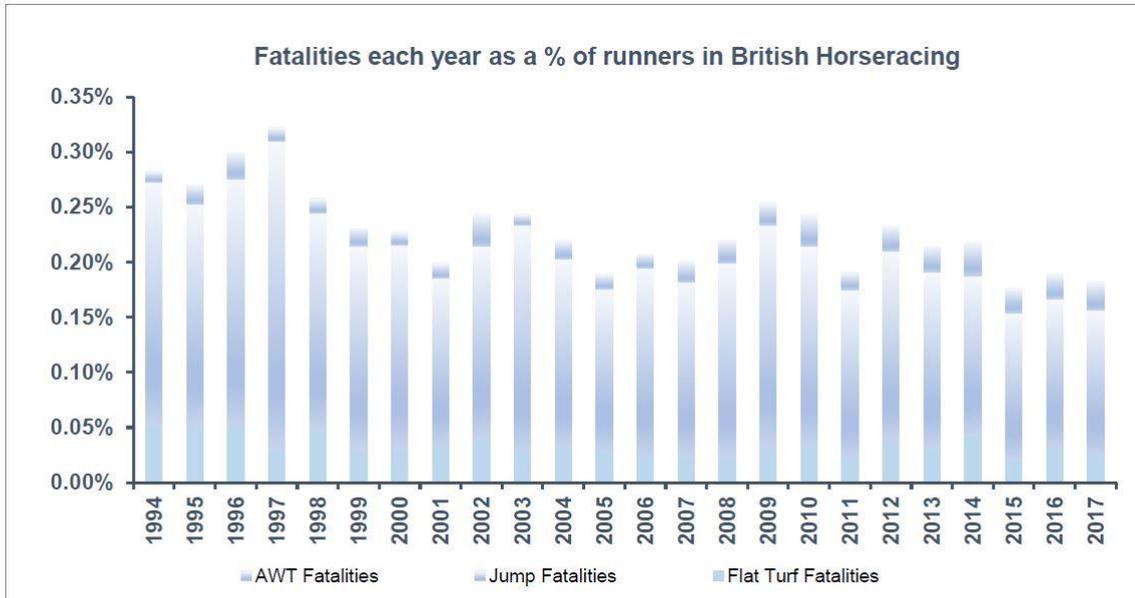
Despite the best efforts of all involved, as with participation in any sport involving speed and athleticism, there remains an inherent risk of injury that cannot be eradicated. Horses are at risk of serious injury throughout their lives, regardless of the type of equestrian activity they participate in, even when turned out in a field, exercising at home or doing what they were bred to do, namely racing on the track. It is the BHA's aim to ensure that no injury or fatal injury occurs which could have been sensibly prevented.

Just some of the measures in place to reduce the likelihood of injury include:

- None of the 1,450 fixtures held annually in Britain can take place unless key BHA equine welfare criteria have been satisfied
- Racecourses have experienced veterinary surgeons and horse ambulances to ensure rapid treatment of any injury
- BHA Veterinary Officers oversee racehorse welfare on every raceday
- BHA Course Inspectors review all standards on racecourses, including racing surfaces and obstacles
- Strict medication control and anti-doping Rules and testing procedures prohibit the use of medication to mask injuries
- BHA monitor all racecourse injuries and fatalities
- Racecourses, the BHA, and all involved in the sport consult and collaborate to deliver improvements and conduct research to reduce risks
- The BHA conduct detailed investigations if concerned at increased incidence of fatalities or injuries
- Racing works together with recognised welfare organisations, including the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare
- Racehorses are extremely fortunate in that they receive a standard of veterinary care unlikely to be bettered by any other breed or type of animal in the country. British Racing is committed to providing the best possible standards of veterinary care for its horses and has invested, via the Horserace Betting Levy Board, over £32 million since 2000 in Veterinary Research and Education projects

What is the level of risk in British Horseracing?

British Racing is open and transparent about the risks involved. Within the last 20 years, the equine fatality rate in British Racing has fallen by one-third (from 0.3% to just over 0.2% of runners). In recent years the average number of runners per annum has been around 90,000.



This chart represents the following number of fatalities in recent years:

	1994		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Runners	71,475		94,776	90,518	91,146	86,456	88,377	89,975	91,360
Fatalities	202		181	211	196	189	156	171	167
Rate	0.28%		0.19%	0.23%	0.22%	0.22%	0.18%	0.19	0.18

Why can injuries be life-threatening in racehorses?

The most serious type of injury sustained by racehorses are bone fractures. With advances in veterinary medicine a number of fractures sustained by horses can now be repaired, often allowing the horse to continue with either its racing career or another career, however, there are difficulties in repairing certain fractures that are not comparable to humans.

One of the biggest challenges for veterinary surgeons when treating all breeds of horses is not repairing the fracture per se, but the post-surgical complications and rehabilitation of a 500kg animal. Recuperation of a horse is a major welfare challenge, as horses do not adapt well to sustained periods of inactivity during convalescence. Additionally horses are not functionally adapted to or capable of spending large periods of time 'lying down' or having a limb put in a sling to prevent weight-bearing and consequently numerous life-threatening complications can result. Complicated, unstable fractures cannot withstand immediate weight-bearing and this means many fractures cannot be repaired. In such circumstances, the most humane measure is to put the horse down.

Additionally the risk of infection after injury, where the skin has been broken, is very high in horses partly due to their physiology and partly due to environmental contamination. Soft tissue injury that accompanies bone fractures in horses can further complicate repair after injury.



Racehorses enjoy a very high standard of care and quality of life when in training. Maintaining a comparable quality of life is a key consideration when considering future options for a horse that has had a serious injury or condition.

An article in [The Guardian](#) discussed in more detail the reasons horses have to be euthanised after sustaining certain injuries regardless of how much their owners and carers wish to save them.

What does the BHA do when fatalities occur?

The BHA takes its responsibility for equine welfare very seriously and constantly reviews statistics and trends regarding racecourse facilities and racing surfaces, particularly if there is concern regarding horse safety.

All injuries and fatalities incurred on the racecourse are recorded and monitored to provide a benchmark from which the industry can continually strive to reduce injury rates. The data enables the BHA Veterinary Officers and officials to critically assess any situations where injury or fatality levels increase and to put in place measures to safeguard horse welfare.

The BHA conduct detailed investigations if we are concerned at increased incidence of fatalities or injuries. Where these investigations are course specific, the process involved includes:

- Thorough review of the career profiles of the injured horses, including any previously recorded on-course injury that they may have sustained.
- Video analysis of all incidents by the BHA's Course Inspectorate and Senior Veterinary Staff
- Mapping of serious injury incidents to establish whether there may be any localised track factors.
- On-site review of condition of track, fences/hurdles and racing programme as applicable involving racecourse Executive and Senior BHA Staff.
- Specific follow up action points for racecourses and/or trainers as necessary.