



### **What is jumps racing?**

Jumps racing is a form of horseracing run over longer distances than flat races and with heavier jockeys. It requires horses to jump typically, as many as thirty-three fixed obstacles. For decades jumps racing has created a major horse welfare concern due to the cruel nature of the sport which involves horses falling and suffering severe injuries resulting in death. There are two types of jumps races, hurdles and steeplechases. Hurdle races are normally shorter (3 -3500 metres) and run at a faster speed over low obstacles whereas steeplechases are normally longer races (3450 – 5000 metres) and are generally run at a slower speed over higher obstacles. Jumps racing is televised across Australia and has increasingly become a national issue. Due to the high number of deaths of horses (12) in the 2008 season, it was described by one member of the media in New South Wales as “jumps racing’s season from hell”.

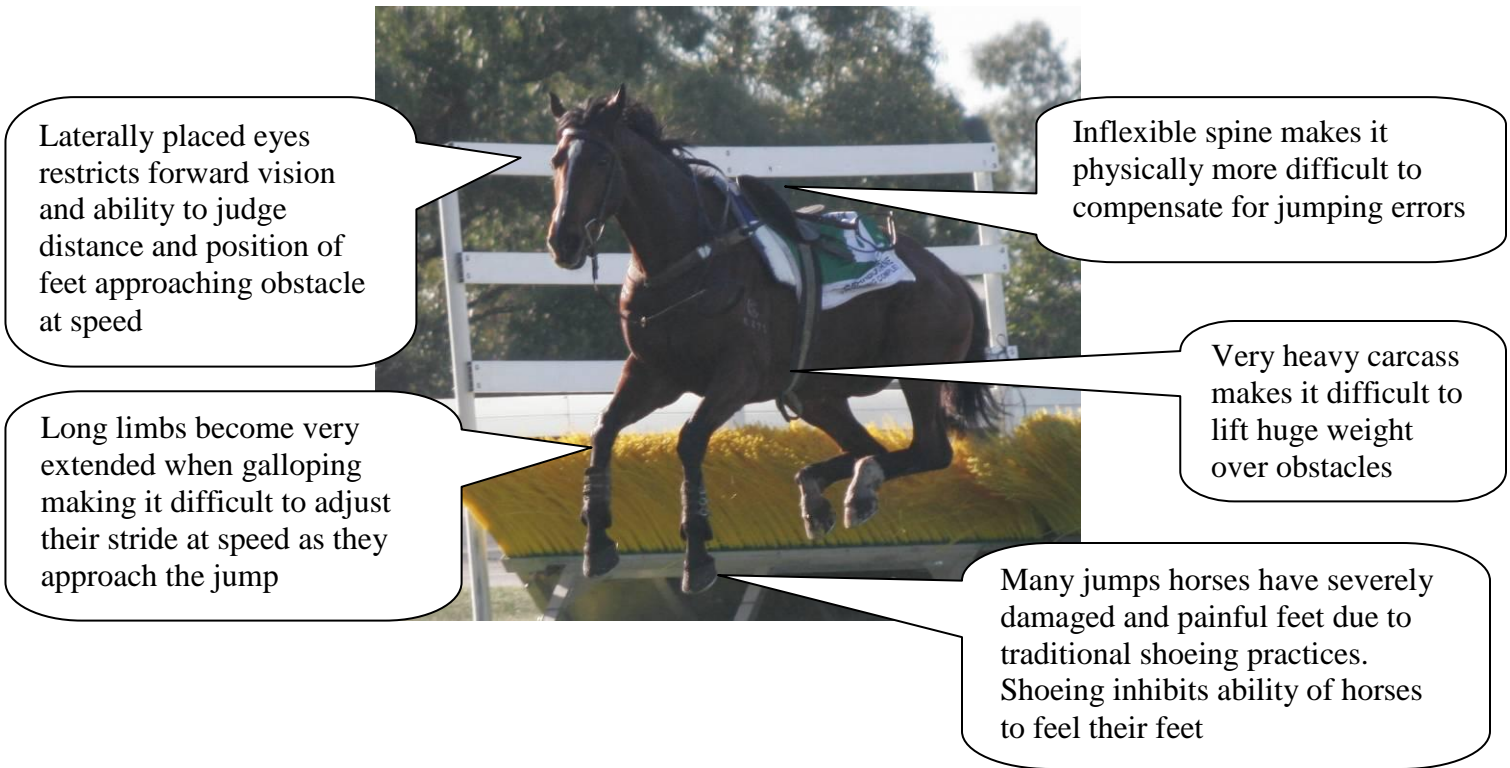
### **History of Jumps racing in Australia**

In 1991, the Senate Select Committee into Animal Cruelty (Jumps Racing) recommended that relevant State Governments should phase out jump racing events on animal welfare grounds. Jumps racing was eventually banned under legislation in NSW in 1997 and phased out in Tasmania in 2007. It is still staged in Victoria and South Australia. The RSPCA (Australia) policy has consistently opposed jumps racing. Jumps racing was described in the media in 1991, as “the most disgusting of animal sports in this part of the world” ...horses are pushed over obstacles carrying heavy weights over long distances and being subjected to such unsportsmanlike tactics as “half-lengthing”, a jockey’s method of making his opposition jump too soon, thus bringing the other horse down.”<sup>1</sup> More recently it has been described in the media as “horrifically cruel” .

### **Why is jumps racing so dangerous to horses?**

The combination of galloping at speed combined with jumping fixed obstacles makes jumps racing inherently dangerous contributing to the much higher risk of injury and death to the horse in a jumps race than in other forms of horseracing. The races are much longer, the riders are heavier and the horses suffer from severe fatigue which affects their limb co-ordination making it even harder for them to jump. Horses jump under pressure beside other horses and there are errors of judgment by both horse and jockey. In addition it is common for horses to be brought down by other horses that are falling and for horses to fall or stumble and lose their rider and then create havoc as they continue running with the field without a jockey to steer them. (a horse is a herd animal and he will generally instinctively stay in close proximity with other horses).

Equine scientists have confirmed that horses did not evolve to be natural jumpers for the following reasons:



Despite experiencing a nasty fall, (front page) this horse continued to jump riderless. It is normal for horses to continue to jump riderless because they have been trained to jump any obstacle in front of them and because they are herd animals who will follow other horses in search of safety.

A degree of elasticity in the musculo-skeletal tissues of the limbs and feet of horses has enabled them to be trained to jump. The horse's huge mass means jumping at speed creates a great deal of momentum (mass x acceleration = force). They therefore cannot refuse to jump if their approach is incorrect. Some jumps horses crash into obstacles whilst trying to evade jumping. Jumping at very slow speeds over collapsible obstacles, such as showjumping, usually enables horses to refuse to jump if they meet the fence incorrectly. If they make an error after take-off, they can usually get out of trouble and avoid injury, because the jump collapses. Jumping at speed and when fatigued over solid obstacles exaggerates the problems horses have because they did not evolve as jumping animals.



In addition, horses are renowned for their noble character and obedience which makes them easy to train

## Jump Racing Statistics

A 15 year study into jump racing was conducted by the University of Melbourne between 1989 and 2004. The findings were presented by Dr Lisa Boden at the International Symposium for the Prevention of Thoroughbred Racehorse Fatalities and Injuries in July 2005, and are summarized as follows.

### Fatalities

Jump horses: 1 death for every 115 horses that start in a race

Flat horses: 1 death for every 2150 horses that start in a race

### Catastrophic limb injuries

Found to be 18 times more likely in jump races

Cranial (head) or vertebral (back and neck) injury

Found to be 121 times more likely in jump races

Sudden death (mostly attributed to cardiovascular or respiratory failure)

Found to be 3.5 times more likely in jump races

These statistics provide clear evidence that jump horses are pushed far beyond their natural limits, and are subjected to much greater musculo-skeletal (limb, head and back injuries) and physiological stress than their flat racing counterparts.



An example of the potential for cranial and vertebral injuries. Picture taken September, 2008 at Cranbourne trials.

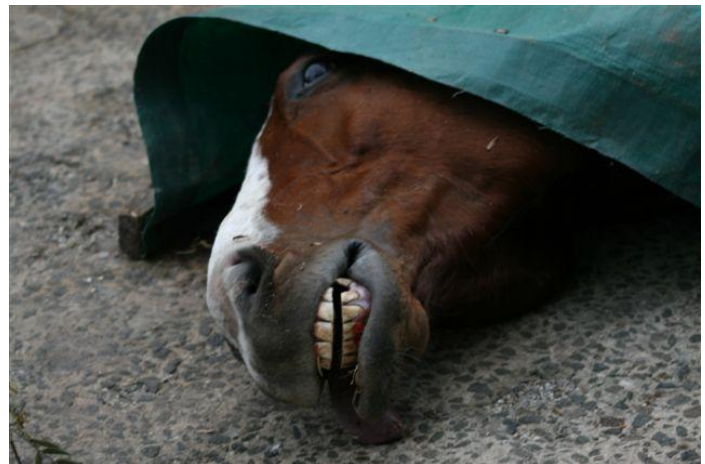
### The 2008 Jumps Racing Season in Victoria

The 1991 report by the Senate Select Committee stated that in Victoria, an average of 11 horses die in jump races every year and that despite steps taken to improve safety the fatality rate would remain constant.<sup>1</sup> A Racing Victoria safety review in 2002 and 2005 suggested many recommendations and changes to make jumps racing safer, however at the close of the 2008 season some 12 horses had died in scheduled races in Victoria and an additional one in a jumps trial. Horses suffered 28 falls.



Horse falling at “jumps trials”

Spanish Symbol was one horse who died in the 2008 season after falling and fracturing a leg. A demonstration at Moonee Valley by some 20 activists resulted in the taking of this picture where he was found dumped at the back of the track under a tarpaulin. Ironically shortly after several police arrived to “guard” his body from horse advocates who were campaigning to ban jumps racing and protect him from the horrific cruelty he suffered.



Spanish Symbol lies dead under the tarpaulin – an activist pulls back the tarpaulin and photographs his head

In June, 2008 Crying Storm died through the lack of proper installation of a hurdle.

Crying Storm suffered a catastrophic injury, shown below as he attempted to jump the obstacle at Sandown. He was caught and moved a considerable distance by an official on three legs so that the race could conclude and therefore there was a delay before he was euthanased, by which time his other forelimb was believed to be also severely injured.



### The use of the whip

The use of the whip in jumps racing appears to be much more prominent than in flat races. This may be attributed to the fact that the rider feels the horse must be whipped to maintain speed as he succumbs to fatigue from the extreme physical stress on his whole system. As the majority of falls occur over the last 2 jumps when the whip is being used, it is likely that the whip combined with fatigue (which scientists suggest affects limb co-ordination) is at least partly to blame. Analysis of racetrack patrol videos (Ueda et al., 1993) has shown that 38% of breakdown injuries occur after the use of the whip.<sup>4</sup>



This jumps horse is being vigorously whipped and his distress is obvious - he has his tongue jammed between his teeth

## Safety Review of Jumps Racing in Victoria

In 2008, as a result of public and industry debate about the merits of the continuing existence of jumps racing in Victoria and fuelled by the 10 horse fatalities (up to 30 June), yet another safety review was commissioned by Racing Victoria Limited and conducted by Retired County Court Judge David Jones. On 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Judge David Jones suspended hurdle racing and jump trials due to safety concerns.

An independent statistical analysis by Animal Liberation of the 290 individual horses who had competed in the 2008 season found that 1 in 3.5 horses had suffered an incident on the racetrack (including those who died) which resulted in them not reappearing that season. Judge David Jones, however, agreed with the Equine Veterinarians Australia submission that stated: “properly regulated use of horses in jumps racing is a legitimate use of equine athletic ability”.<sup>5</sup> This was despite evidence of alarming complacency and incompetency of participants and administrators revealed in the 200 page safety review of the conduct of jumps racing by Racing Victoria Limited.

## Legislative position

On 3 November 2005 there were amended provisions to the Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1986. Judge Jones’ made the following statements in the 2008 Review of Jumps Racing: “Originally, the Section 9 (1) © provided that “a person who knowingly or negligently does or omits to do an act with the result that unnecessary, unreasonable or unjustifiable pain or suffering is caused to an animal...is guilty of an offence...” Now, the section provides for the situation where a person does or omits to do an act with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused, or is *likely* to be caused to an animal.”<sup>5</sup>

“Similarly, section 9(1)(e) provided that “a person who knowingly or negligently works, rides, drives or uses an animal when it is unfit for the purpose...is guilty of an offence...”. Now, the section provides for the situation where a person works, rides, drives or uses an animal when it is unfit for the purpose *with the result that unreasonable pain or suffering is caused to an animal*. Amendments to the Act were designed to improve provisions relating, inter alia, to certain cruelty offences that had been identified as insufficiently addressing instances of cruelty due to inappropriate or inadequate wording of the provisions. The wording of section 9 (1)(c), for example, applied where the offender knowingly or negligently did or omitted to do an act. Prosecutions under this section had failed due to an inability to establish the defendant’s intention to offend despite objective evidence of unnecessary, unjustifiable or unreasonable pain and suffering being caused to the animal. Since the amended provisions have been operative for less than three years, it is relatively untested legislation.”<sup>5</sup>

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