

HORSE RACING SAFETY

FACTS ABOUT THE SPORT & OUR EQUINE ATHLETES

Racehorses are athletes, and like all athletes, they incur injuries. The vast majority of these injuries are rehabilitative. However, on rare occasions, our equine athletes sustain a catastrophic injury. So, how safe is horse racing, really?

★ 34 ★

PERCENT

DECREASE IN
CATASTROPHIC INJURIES
IN THE US SINCE 2009¹

IN NEW YORK,
NYRA HAS USED ITS RESOURCES TO
AFFECT A 43% DECREASE SINCE 2012²



What is a catastrophic injury?

While “catastrophic” is defined as “involving or causing sudden great damage or suffering,” in horse racing, it generally refers to a career-ending or fatal injury. It is the most humane thing to do to put down the horse in these situations.



How do we define “humane”?

What is humane for a horse is different than what is humane for a human. The on-track medical personnel sometimes make a decision that seems rash or unjust, but that is not the case. They are performing diagnostics and doing what is best for the horse in the long-term.



Many types of fractures in horses are reparable with surgery or rest. However, a compound fracture carries a great risk for infection, even if the bones are somehow stabilized. Further, if weight cannot be put on the injured leg, surgery is not recommended.



Horses' entire circulation and digestive systems are designed for movement, with their weight distributed on all four legs. If a disproportionate amount of their weight is placed on only two or three of their legs, they are prone to developing conditions that leave them in pain and/or require euthanasia.

While euthanasia is never the desired choice, it is sometimes the only humane one. As racing fans, industry insiders and horse lovers, we have to trust that the choices the medical teams are making are the right ones for the animal to mitigate their suffering. It is important to note that medical teams do not make decisions alone. At minimum, they speak with trainers prior to making the call. Decisions are made between the vet team and the horse's connections as a collective decision.

CATASTROPHIC INJURIES ARE RARE

The incidence rate is roughly 1.32 per 1,000 starts, which makes them statistically rare.³ Even when they do occur, they rarely have much in common, but we are identifying potential steps for targeted intervention which has helped and will continue to help us drive down the injury rate.

99
PERCENT

THE PERCENTAGE OF
STARTS WITHOUT A
CALAMITOUS INJURY.



SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



ENGAGE • ELEVATE • INVEST
WOMENINRACING.COM

1-Source: <https://jockeyclub.com/default.asp?section=Advocacy&area=10>,

2- Source: <https://breakdown.gaming.ny.gov/> (Stats for NYRA tracks came from the New York State Gaming Commission's website. However, they only publish "Equine Breakdown, Death, Injury and Incident," which means that some of these deaths could be from a heart attack, heat stroke, or some other non-broken-bone incident.)

3 - Average over 2021, 2022, and 2023: <https://jockeyclub.com/default.asp?section=Advocacy&area=10>