

ANOTHER JUMPS RACING DEATH

'The Illogical Races' claim another victim at Murray Bridge today

As a horror jumps racing season continues, Surface to Air has today died as a result of competing in the 3280m distance hurdle at Murray Bridge, the second horse in South Australia this year.

The four-year-old gelding was euthanised after breaking down before the second to last of eleven hurdles during Race One. According to TRSA steward Matthew Santoro who viewed the footage, the horse appeared to break a hind leg. RSPCA South Australia has so far been unable to get confirmation of the injury from stewards at the track.

Dr Rebekah Eyers, RSPCA South Australia Animal Welfare Advocate, says it appears from the footage that Surface to Air was suffering fatigue as a result of being pushed to race over a long distance and jumping multiple hurdles.

“Surface to Air was clearly struggling with the distance, one of the many factors that make jumps races deadly for horses and dangerous for jockeys. They are forced to jump hurdles, in a pack, at great speed, over significantly longer distances than most flat races.

“Flat races are rarely held over more than 3200 metres. The average distance of jumps (hurdle and steeplechase) events on the 2014 South Australian jumps program is 3337 metres.

“Furthermore, horses are required to carry heavier weights in jumps races than flat - minimum 64kg compared to 54kg for flat races. Surface to Air was carrying 69kg - the second heaviest weight being carried by any horse in the race.

“This only serves to demonstrate why horses participating in a jumps race are 19 times more likely to die than those in a flat race,” she said.

The SA Select Committee who conducted the inquiry into jumps racing handed down its report late last year and granted the industry three more years (to the end of the 2019 season) to improve its appalling

animal welfare record. The Committee indicated two KPI targets on which to judge if the situation was improving, one relating to the number of falls and the other to the number of deaths in South Australia jumps races.

The Select Committee report stated that the jumps racing industry should maintain a maximum fall rate of 3%. The fall rate is now more than double the benchmark.

With two horses now killed in South Australian jumps races so far this season, the industry has also delivered a result that is double the KPI target for deaths.

RSPCA South Australia is renewing its calls to Thoroughbred Racing SA (TRSA) to take immediate action to stop jumps racing in South Australia, and questions the role of the Select Committee in policing the outcomes of races since handing down its findings.

“With two deaths and at least seven falls resulting in injuries to both horses and jockeys, we can’t afford another three years of death and carnage on our racetracks,” said Dr Evers.

“The Select Committee stated in its report that it was calling the industry to account.

“We would like to know exactly how the industry is being called to account when there is no mandatory requirement on TRSA to implement any of the Committee’s 28 recommendations.

“Exactly how this Inquiry has benefitted the welfare of jumps race horses remains wholly unclear.

“We urge TRSA to withdraw jumps events from future racing programs and we encourage members of the public to get on board and take action to help bring an end to this senseless and cruel activity,” Dr Evers said.

Visit www.rspca.org.au/jumps-racing to write to TRSA and tell them you want to see an end to jumps racing.

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