



British Racing and the Aintree Grand National

The welfare of the sport's equine and human participants is paramount to British Horseracing and remains the over-riding priority for all those involved with the staging of the Grand National meeting.

- All racehorses trained in Britain are stabled at premises licensed by the British Horseracing Authority (BHA). The sport employs over 6,000 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.
- The BHA works closely and openly with Government and the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare. The standards demanded by the BHA of all licensed participants, including jockeys and trainers, far exceed those prescribed by animal welfare legislation.
- These welfare criteria are enforced by independent vets and officials at every fixture, alongside a team of racecourse inspectors, stable inspectors and investigating officers.
- Aintree Racecourse and BHA work in conjunction to ensure that the highest standards are met. Aintree employs nine experienced veterinary surgeons, whose sole responsibility it is to provide care to the horses throughout their time at the racecourse. The racecourse also has state-of-the-art horse ambulances and treatment facilities to ensure that the best treatment is available.

In the event of an incident on the racecourse:

- Any horse affected will receive immediate attention and treatment from racecourse vets.
- Qualified paramedics and doctors, are also on hand in the case of any incident involving a jockey.
- If necessary, horses and riders will be transported from the course to receive further treatment at the most appropriate equine hospital or Accident & Emergency hospital.

"It must be remembered Britain has the best equine vets in the world, and the BHA's teams of vets on racecourses are fantastic, totally committed. I've found the BHA to be transparent in everything I request of them." David Muir, RSPCA Equine Consultant.

Despite the best efforts of all involved, as with participation in any sport involving speed and athleticism, there remains an inherent risk of injury. British Racing is open and transparent about the risks involved in the sport.

99.58% of runners in British racing complete their race without incurring any long-term injury. Moreover, the fatal injury rate has fallen by one third in the last 30 years to just 0.18%.

Faller rates during jump races have decreased to an all-time low of just 2.56%. That's a decrease of 29% in the last 20 years as a result of initiatives to make racecourses and jump racing safer.

Sport horses are at no greater risk of injury when running and jumping on a race course, than when turned out in the field – a recent study by Liverpool University found that 62% of traumatic injuries in sport horses occurred in the field, compared to 13% while being ridden.

Without horseracing there would be no thoroughbred racehorse. The care and the support structures that the 14,000 horses in training at any one time receive are superior to those available to almost all other domesticated animals. As a result, racing brings far more life to the horse population than it takes away. And the quality of those lives is astonishingly high.



The Grand National

The safety of all participants is Aintree Racecourse's number one priority. Since 2009 more than £1.5 million has been invested in safety and welfare measures.

Applying an evidence based approach, Aintree, together with the BHA, have left no stone unturned in seeking to reduce risk to both horse and rider whilst maintaining the Grand National's unique character.

The evidence shows that races over the Grand National course are becoming safer, reflecting the measures that have been implemented to raise welfare standards.

There have been no fatalities in the Grand National since 2012. In 2017 317 runners competed across all three days of the Grand National festival with no fatal injuries.

Modifications to the Grand National course since 2009 include:

- Replacing the previous timber central frame, or core, of all the fences with more forgiving plastic birch and natural birch. This followed a research programme instigated by Aintree and the BHA in 2011. The dimensions of all fences remain unchanged, as does their appearance.
- Moving the start 90 yards forward away from the Stands. The objective being to create a calmer and more controlled environment at the start for both horse and rider.
- Continual on-going investment in the racing surface, with £460,000 spent on enhancing Aintree's watering system, to ensure the safest possible jumping ground possible.
- Levelling the landing side of some fences, including at Becher's Brook.

These modifications built on the range of measures introduced following the comprehensive 2011 Review, which, among other items, led to the introduction of stricter qualification criteria for horses and jockeys, and also an air-cooled wash down area for horses post-race.

Aintree, in consultation with the BHA, will continue to adopt an evidence based approach to any proposals for further change. For example, one area examined carefully and not changed, is the maximum field size of 40 runners in the Grand National. Reviews have provided no evidence to suggest that a reduced field size would reduce the risk of injury to horse or rider.

Equally, maintaining the current height and dimensions of the fences is considered important in order to deter increased speed.

The BHA has shown, through its recently announced review of the Cheltenham Festival, that it continues to be prepared to take steps, as the sport's independent regulator, to ensure that the welfare of our participants remains a focus.

This evidence-based approach applies equally at the sport's grass roots and its most historic and treasured events such as the Grand National and Cheltenham Festival.