

## *I'm boycotting horseracing because it's lethal*

By DJ Tigerlily

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Horseracing, far from being a "sport" in which all players involved participates willingly, feeds on the exploitation of the beings it supposedly prizes: the horses. It's objectification, and it's deadly. Last year, 122 horses died on Australian racetracks, according to the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses. That's an average of one every three days.



An industry under scrutiny ... the action at Randwick on Saturday. AAP

The most common cause of death, claiming 61 lives, was forelimb injury. If you're thinking, "That needn't be fatal, surely?" you'd be right. But in a world where these majestic animals are valued for their ability to race and win, a broken leg is, indeed, a death sentence. Other major causes of death were collapse, cardiac disease, and internal bleeding.

American performer Taylor Swift was savvy when she heeded the outcry of fans and cancelled her performance for this year's Melbourne Cup. Kelly Rowland would have been wise to snub the Everest in Sydney on Saturday, but she didn't. As a performer, I will never support this disgraceful industry.

Of the 122 horses that died last year, 54 had been raced for the first time at a mere two years of age. At this age, a horse's skeleton is rarely mature enough to handle the physical stress of racing. Little wonder that almost half of the horses that die on our tracks started competing while juveniles – because investors want as much bang for their buck as they can get.

Off the track, highly concentrated grain-based training diets lead to an abnormally high incidence of stomach problems. One study at Royal Randwick racecourse found that 89 per cent of horses there developed stomach ulcers – often deep, bleeding ones – within eight weeks of commencing training.

Then there's "wastage", the term used to refer to the horses slaughtered when their racing days are over – or before they begin. Here, even the industry's own estimation of 34 horses a year would be 34 too many. As was just revealed by the ABC's 7.30 investigation last week, that figure is false. The investigation showed it was closer to 34 horses a week arriving at a single slaughterhouse. That was about 4000 horses, over two years, panicking inside "kill boxes" while workers used anal electric shocks on them before taking a bolt to their brains.

Other horses still become victims of the live export trade. In June, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) said about [3000 Australian horses and their offspring had been cast off by the racing industry and killed for meat in South Korea](#). One abattoir now faces cruelty charges for the abuse PETA exposed.

These statistics used to be cleverly hidden behind a glamorous veil of fashion, music, food and celebration at spectacles such as the Melbourne Cup Carnival. Thankfully, more people are waking up to the truth about the cruelty of breeding intelligent, gentle animals into existence only to harm them by forcing them well beyond their limit, all for financial gain.

Don't get me wrong. Getting glammed up and sipping champagne with my girl gang is one of my favourite things to do, but not against a backdrop of horse exploitation.

**DJ Tigerlily is an Australian performer and animal rights advocate.**