

122 horses die on Australian race tracks in past year, report says

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More than 100 horses have died on Australian racetracks in the past 12 months, according to a new report.

The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses has collated data from stewards' documents in each state and territory and found 122 horses died between August 2018 and July 2019.

The most prevalent cause of death was catastrophic front limb injury, with 61 occurrences.

Other causes of death included bleeds and cardiac failure.

Coalition spokeswoman Kristen Leigh said while the figures were comparable to previous years, the overall mortality rate was potentially much higher.

"It works out to one horse on average dying on Australian racetracks every three days," she said.

"It's really important to highlight that this is just the deaths that we're finding on stewards' reports that we track, so there are a lot of deaths that occur if a horse is injured on the track and taken away and then killed a day or two later.

"That death doesn't make it into the stewards' report and isn't required to, so there is no doubt that the incidence of death is much higher than we're aware of.

"It really is to force transparency to show what's really going on in this industry and hopefully people make more informed decisions about whether they chose to support it or not."

'Every horse death regrettable'

Racing Australia maintains that while the figures are unfortunate, efforts are being made to drive down the number of horse deaths.

Chief executive Barry O'Farrell said the industry had committed enormous financial resources to try and avoid fatal accidents.

"One death is one too many, but we need to understand that over the past year, almost 182,000 horses got a start in more than 19,000 races across Australia and that our fatality rate is far lower than for countries like Britain," he said.

"The industry invests hundreds of thousands of dollars into research, it invests into facilities including tracks and fencing, but it also provides supervisory staff like vets at every race meeting to try and avoid these sorts of accidents and any deaths.

"The 70,000 people that are employed in the industry across Australia work tirelessly to provide first-class care to our horses.

"It's incredibly hard to completely remove the risk of accidents from any activity.

"Wherever they occur, a horse death is a cause for regret."