

The Equine Mortality Review Panel: Defining the need, determining the process



What it's not... the Spanish Inquisition



No one expects the Spanish Inquisition!

What it is...

...a collegial and respectful conversation based on the premise that no stakeholder benefits from the death of a racehorse.

What it includes...

A methodical review of information that is intended to identify practical, applicable, and relevant interventions having the potential to reduce the occurrence of racing fatalities

Can it work?

Panel members expressed concerns that people would be defensive, reluctant to openly discuss the circumstances surrounding a racing fatality

The Answer: A Resounding, “Yes!”

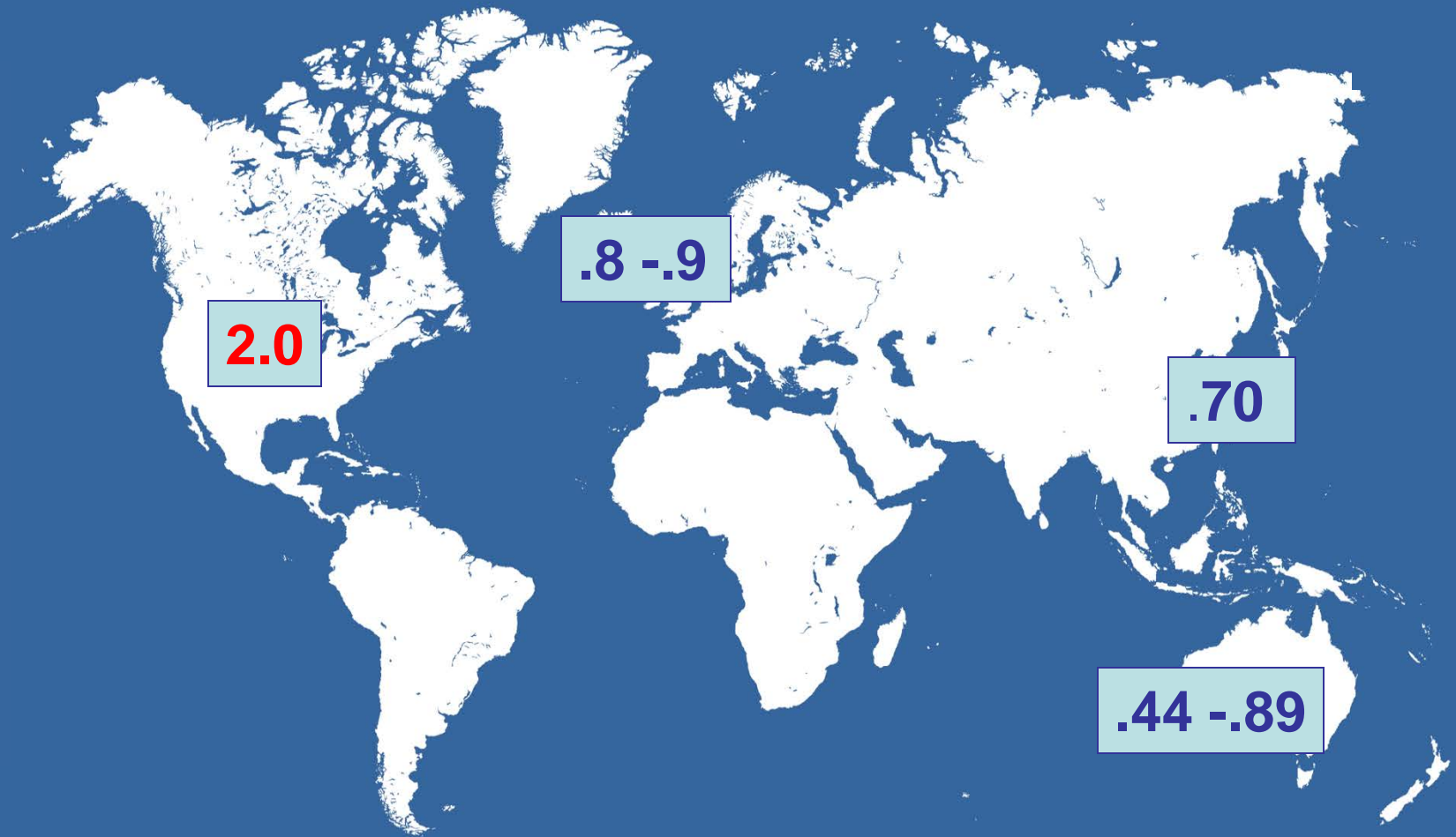
Stakeholders have been:

- Receptive
- Communicative
- Responsive
- Appreciative



So, what's the point?

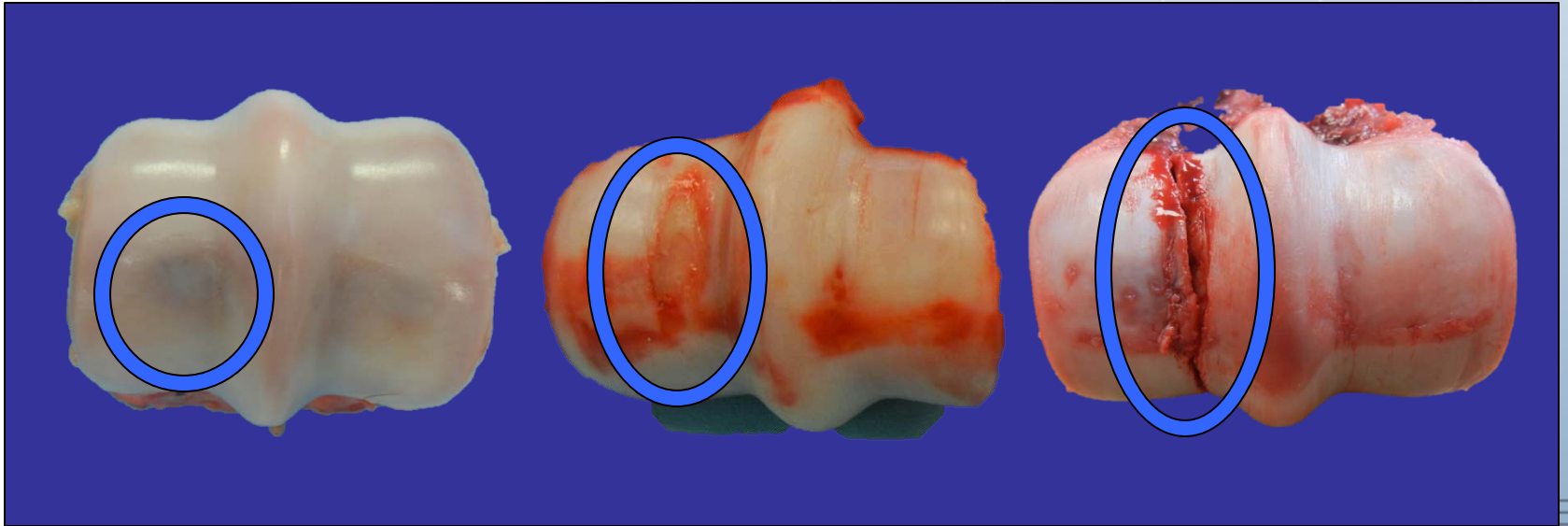
Occurrence of Thoroughbred racing fatalities per 1,000 starts



The Facts:

Many variables; one constant

Pre-existing lesions are present in virtually all musculoskeletal-origin fatalities





“Really, Doc? He broke his right leg?
There’s a surprise. That was his good one!”



NY Task Force on Race Horse Health and Safety

“50%
of
race-related fatalities
could have been
prevented/avoided”

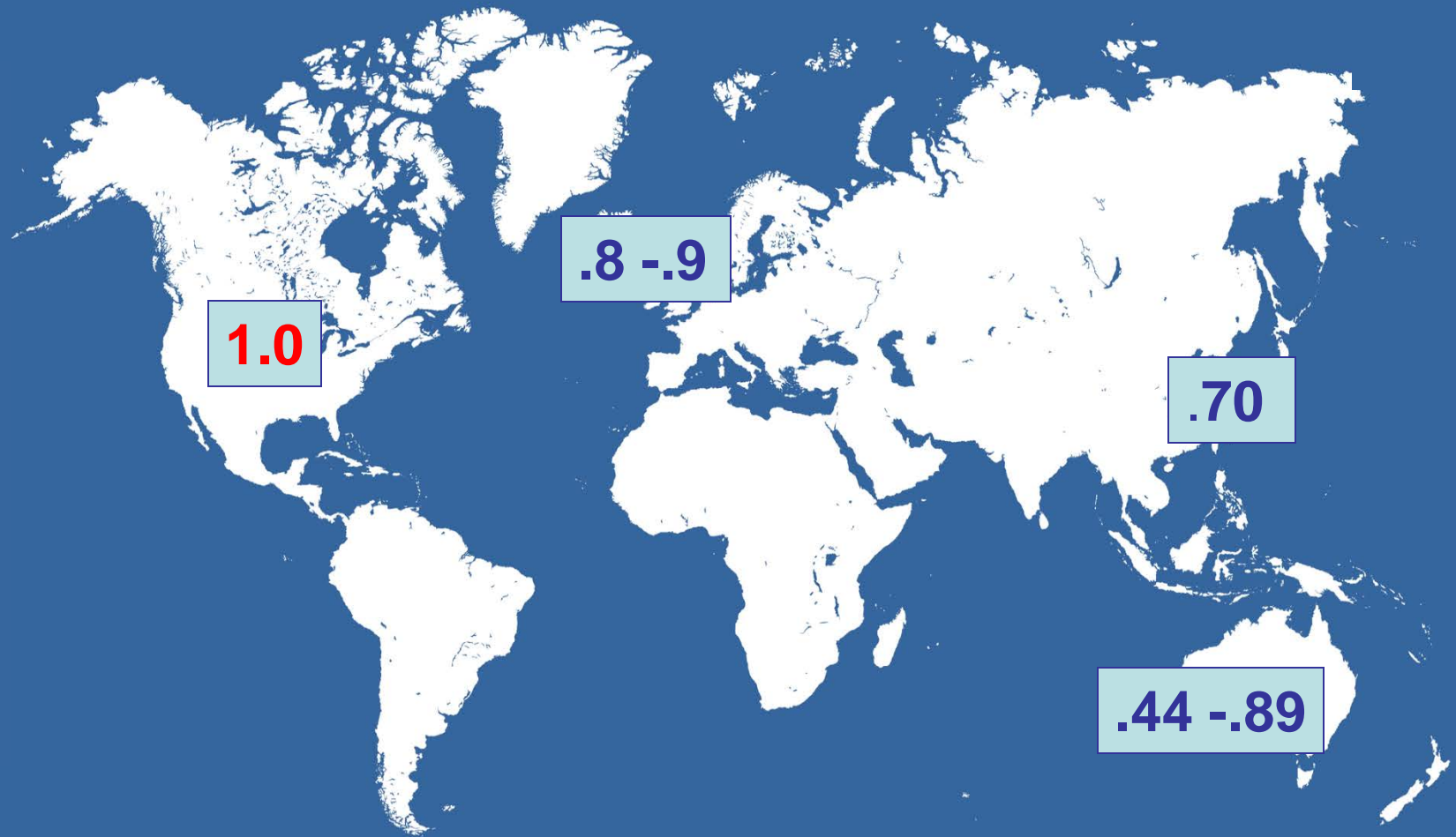
New York Task Force on
Racehorse Health and Safety



OFFICIAL REPORT

Investigation of Equine Fatalities at
Aqueduct 2011-2012 Fall/Winter Meet

Occurrence of Thoroughbred racing fatalities per 1,000 starts



The Goal

Determine if opportunities for intervention were missed.

And if so, why?

The Process

- Information acquisition
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Information Acquisition

- Interviews
 - Trainer
 - Practicing veterinarian
 - Regulatory veterinarians
 - Jockey
 - Track superintendent
 - Other individuals associated with the horse

Information Acquisition

- Documents & published materials
 - Necropsy report
 - Drug testing results
 - Veterinary treatment reports
 - Jockey Club Equine Injury Database
 - KHRC veterinarians' records
 - Race video replay
 - Horse Past Performances & work history
 - Track superintendent's records

Dispelling the myth of inevitability

“It’s just part of the game.”

Acceptance without objective analysis
results in
complacency

Nature vs. Nurture



In California, > 35% of horses on the Vets' List are managed by < 5% of the trainers.

The Turfway experience...

- Winter racing—extreme weather variables
- Horse population
 - Predominantly lower level claiming
 - Many horses making 1 start/week
 - Medication usage-minimal

0 Fatalities over a 3 month period

A bright sun is shining from the upper left, creating a lens flare effect across the sky. The sky is a deep blue, and there are several fluffy white clouds scattered throughout. The overall scene is bright and clear.

Was it.... a miracle?



Nope.

It was risk management that benefitted the horse.

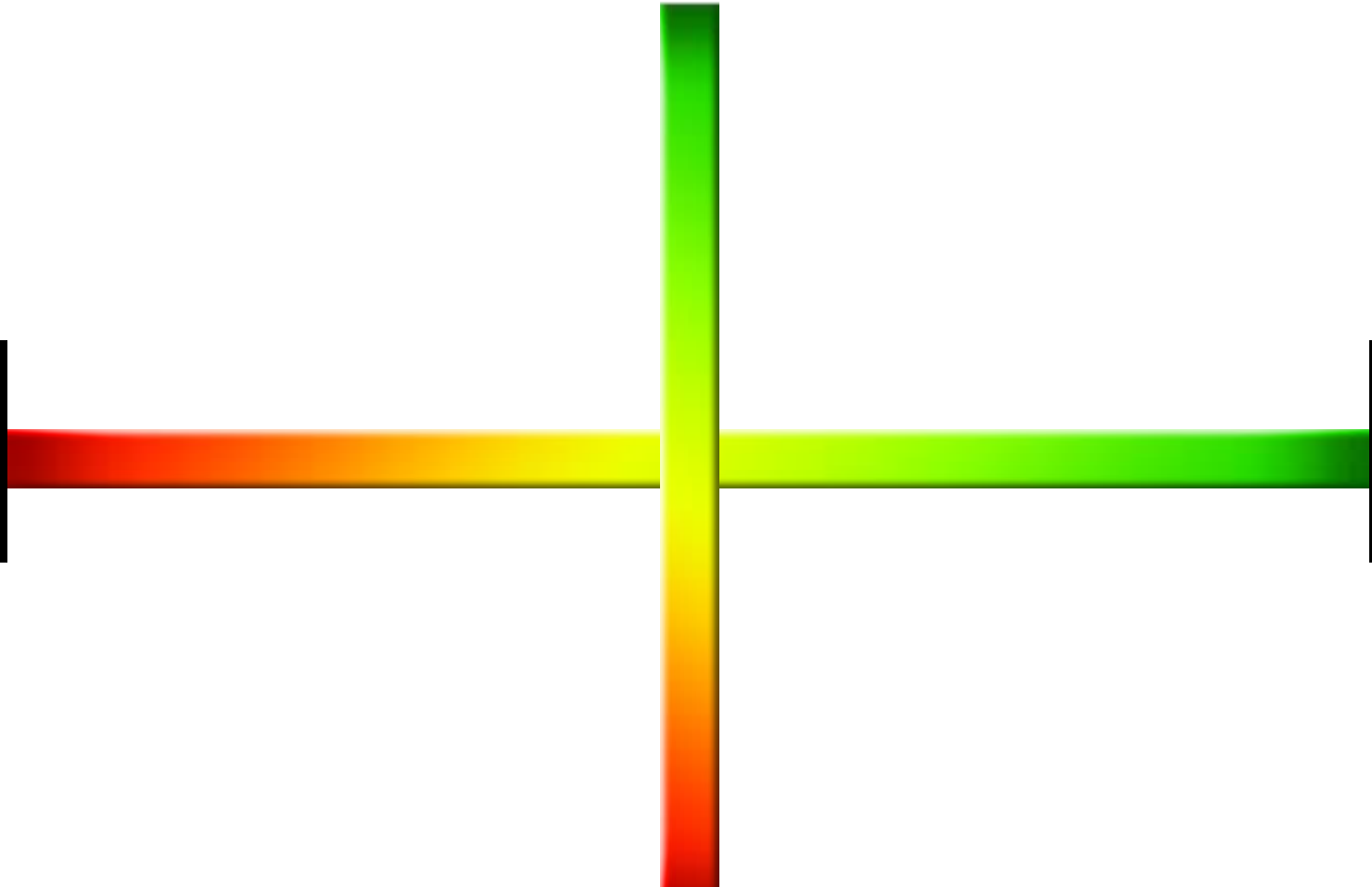
- There was a recognition that the loss of a horse was an unrecoverable event for the connections.
- The result: Communal risk management that was protective of horse health and safety.

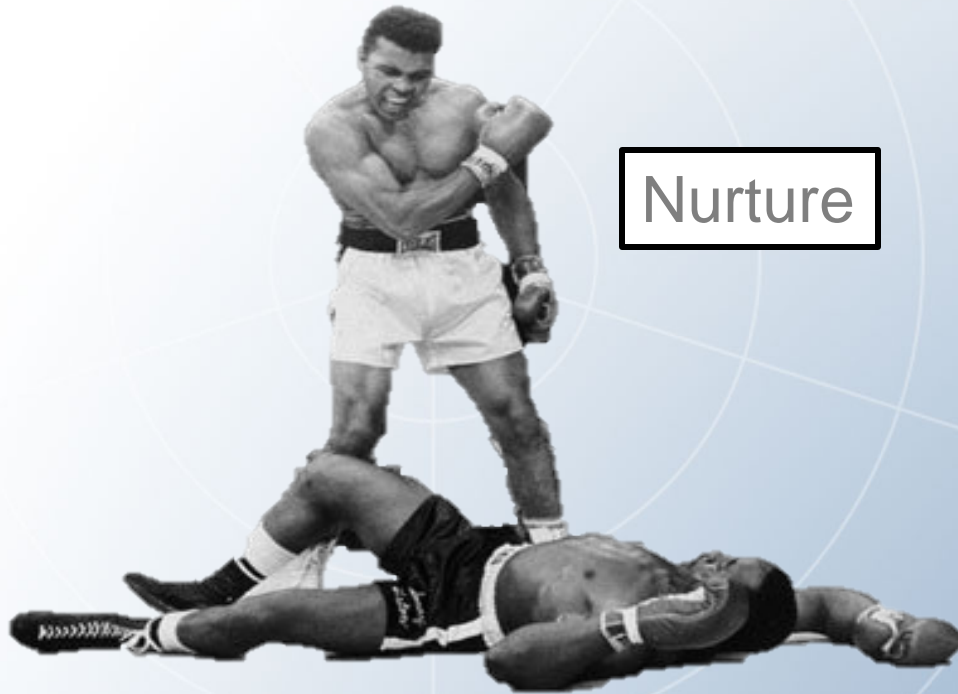
Conditional
Advocate
Benefit High

Conditional
Advocate
Benefit Low

Horse
Risk
high

Horse
Risk
Low





Nurture

Nature

The Bottom Line

- Who knew what? And when?
 - And what did they do about it?
 - Was that the right thing to do?
 - What should have been done?
 - And why wasn't it?
-
- If no one knew, could they have?
 - And if so, why didn't they?

Thank you.

