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War Horses

The use of horses in the First World War marked a turning point in the history of conflict. Initially considered essential, over the course of the war, the vulnerability of horses to machine gun and artillery fire reduced their role on the battlefield. By war's end, eight million horses had been killed and the horse had been rendered obsolete as a meaningful tool of war.

Dubbo racing star 'Dipso' was taken to war by owner Reginald Roy Brown when he enlisted in the 6th Light Horse Brigade. Serving at Gallipoli, Brown became ill and was eventually evacuated to a hospital in England. During his recovery, Brown accepted a commission into the Royal Field Artillery and did not see his beloved horse 'Dipso' again. In the First World War, 136,000 horses were sent overseas for use by the Australian Imperial Force. Like so many of those who served, 'Dipso' did not return home. Only one horse would make it back to Australia.

Whilst many horses travelled with their owners as war horses, the large number of horses required by the war for other duties, such as transport and deliveries, naturally left a significant gap in the local economy. Farmers were forced to find alternative means to manage properties and stock, hastening the end of the horse as the primary tool of farming as well.

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