

The 33rd Running of the Willowdale Steeplechase on Saturday, May 9, 2026

Kennett Square, PA – The Willowdale Steeplechase returns on Saturday, May 9, 2026, for its 33rd running, continuing a spring tradition that brings together families, friends, and racing fans from across the region. The races take place on 160 acres of preserved Chester County countryside.

Horses will compete in six jump races for \$115,000 in purse money, contested over two courses. Hurdle races are run over natural hedges, while the timber course includes post-and-rail fences, an open ditch, and water jumps. The layout allows spectators to view much of the racing from across the grounds.

"Willowdale is first and foremost a community event," said Chairman Dixon Stroud. "It brings people together for a day outdoors while supporting two organizations doing important work."

Event beneficiaries are the Stroud Water Research Center and the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center. Proceeds from the event directly support freshwater research, veterinary care, and education through these organizations. The event's motto is Racing for Life.

The **Willowdale Turf Club** returns in 2026 following a highly successful debut last year. Ideal for guests who want to enjoy the day without packing a picnic, the expanded, fully catered Turf Club Tent offers a relaxed, social atmosphere with elevated food and beverage offerings. Available as a stand-alone experience or paired with a Tailgate Package or General Admission ticket, the Turf Club provides a refined and effortless way to enjoy the races.

New in 2026 is a partnership with **The Chester County Motor Social**. A curated selection of high-end and exotic vehicles will be showcased in a dedicated corral adjacent to the VIP Turf Club Tent.

This year's tailgate theme, **Groovy at the Gallops – Boho at Willowdale**, invites relaxed style, flower-power flair, and a playful nod to retro fun, with the horses always taking center stage. Guests are encouraged to dress up their tailgates, their outfits, or both for the Tailgate Competition, as well as the Best Dressed and Best Hat awards, judged throughout the day.

Gates open at 10:00 a.m. **Antique Car Display** participants arrive at that time. The **Jack Russell Terrier Races** start at 10:30 a.m. followed by the **Pony Races** at 11:30 a.m. Post time for the first **Steeplechase Race** is at 1:00 p.m.

Between races, guests can visit a trade fair featuring more than 30 vendors, enjoy beer and wine service, and choose from two food trucks.

Additional attractions include an Antique Car Display, a **Stick Pony Race**, Kids Alley with children's activities, and educational exhibits presented by the event's beneficiaries.

The Willowdale Steeplechase blends top-level sport, outdoor entertainment, and community fundraising into a single-day spring tradition.

For tickets and information, visit www.willowdale.org or call 610-444-1582.