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CHRB ADVISORY

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CLARIFICATION CONCERNING ELIVETTE

The recent incident at Del Mar involving the injury and claim of Elivette involves two separate issues that warrant clarification. The first is whether Elivette should have been euthanized on the track.

Dr. Rick Arthur, equine medical director for the California Horse Racing Board, said, "The answer is clearly no. Euthanasia is an irreversible decision. For that reason the American Association of Equine Practitioners recommends that when it can be done safely and humanely, all horses should be taken off the track, so they can be properly evaluated by the attending veterinarian (s). All major racetracks in California have followed that approach for many years. Horses survive injuries today and lead productive lives, some even returning to racing. On-track euthanasia is warranted only when there is no reasonable alternative, and these situations do happen, but in the case of Elivette, Del Mar's track veterinarian, Dr. Dana Stead, determined Elivette could be safely transported off the track. This allowed her veterinarians to evaluate the extent of her injuries and make the appropriate decision after consulting with the owners and trainer. A Kimsey brace—an injury stabilization device developed at southern California tracks was placed on her injured leg and Elivette was transported the short distance to the trainer's barn. Her veterinarians were notified she was on her way before she was off the track, so they could attend to her quickly."

The second issue is changes to the claiming rule, which allows claims to be voided. Dr. Arthur explained, "The first Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit in 2006 made over 30 recommendations to make racing safer for horses and riders. One of the recommendations sought to protect claiming horses by allowing for the voiding of claims of horses that are injured or do not finish. No change is easy in racing and the question of voiding claims on injured horses has been debated for years. After considerable discussion and input from the industry, the CHRB adopted a revised version that limited the conditions under which a claim would be voided. The limitations of the rule were thoroughly discussed and officially described in public documents. Whether to purchase claiming insurance or not, as with all insurance, is a business decision based on risks and vulnerabilities. Only a handful of claims under unusual circumstances have been voided under this rule. Regardless, the effort to void claims was never a claim insurance issue. It is a horse welfare issue."

The voiding of claims for severely injured horses has been scheduled for some time to be addressed either at the August 23 meeting of the CHRB or the August 24 meeting of the CHRB Medication and Track Safety Committee.

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