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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD RESTRICTS USE OF SHOCK WAVE THERAPY

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board notified trainers and veterinarians Monday of new restrictions beginning July 24 on the use of shock wave therapy (SWT) for the treatment of orthopedic injuries to horses at California racetracks.

Effective with the start of the Del Mar race meet, horses receiving SWT treatment cannot be entered to race for seven days following a treatment. Furthermore, all SWT machines must be registered with the CHRB official veterinarian and can only be operated by veterinarians. All SWT treatments must be confidentially reported to the CHRB official veterinarian.

SWT involves the use of a machine to transmit energy waves through the skin to underlying soft tissue and bones. While this treatment can be very beneficial in the treatment of certain orthopedic conditions, it also appears that the treatment can produce an analgesic effect (pain relief), which makes it a safety issue for horses and riders. In a memo to CHRB veterinarians and stewards, Executive Director Roy Wood indicated that “the analgesia produced by SWT is a matter of concern.”

SWT is a relatively new treatment in horses. This therapy has been used in human medicine for more than 15 years for the treatment of tennis elbow and bone spurs and to break up kidney stones and gallstones.

In researching this matter, Dr. Ronald Jensen, the CHRB equine medical director, discussed SWT with official and practicing veterinarians at California racetracks to get their input and learn of their experiences with SWT. Veterinarians agreed that analgesia is produced for a period of time following SWT treatment. It is not absolutely known how long this analgesia lasts, but it is generally recognized by the veterinary community to last up to five days.

Wood said SWT will continue to be reviewed and adjustments to these procedures may be made if necessary.

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