

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 263-6000
Fax (916) 263-6042

CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD

12235 Beach Blvd., Suite 7
Stanton, CA 90680
(714) 890-7001
Fax (714) 890-7006
Contact:
Mike Marten
(714) 890-7004
Cell: (714) 240-1870

CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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ASSEMBLY PASSES EQUINE DRUG TESTING BILL

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Assembly approved legislation Thursday to allow the California Horse Racing Board to conduct TCO₂ testing and to designate the University of California at Davis as the primary testing laboratory for the Board – taking the CHRB a step closer to its desired goal of having the Davis laboratory perform all drug testing for California horse racing.

The Assembly approved the legislation, AB 52, by a vote of 73 to 2. The Senate Governmental Organization Committee will consider the bill next. If approved by the GO Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee, and then by the full Senate, the bill would then go to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for his signature.

The bill deals with two separate issues pertaining to equine drug testing. The first issue involves testing for alkalizing agents that could affect the outcome of a race, a practice known as “milkshaking.”

All California racetracks currently are voluntarily administering total carbon dioxide (TCO₂) testing programs with strong encouragement from the CHRB and the cooperation of horsemen’s organizations. The CHRB adopted a rule in January for TCO₂ testing but a modification of state law relative to split-sample testing was required before the Board could assume responsibility for TCO₂ testing. Assembly Member Jerome E. Horton (D-Inglewood) introduced AB 52 to change the split-sample requirement only as it pertains to TCO₂ testing.

If AB 52 ultimately becomes law, the rule adopted by the CHRB will be sent to other government agencies for review and final approval. The rule sets a maximum level of TCO₂ at 37.0 millimoles per liter of blood serum or plasma. An excessive level of TCO₂ will be treated as a Class 3 violation in the CHRB classification system requiring a disqualification with forfeiture of any purse monies. Additional penalties could include fines and suspensions. The revised rule includes a provision allowing horse owners to request the pre-race collection of split samples and testing at their own expense.

On behalf of the California horse-racing industry, Assembly Member Horton amended AB 52 to include a second matter relating to equine testing after California racing commissioners signaled their desire in March for the Kenneth L. Maddy Equine Analytical Laboratory at UC Davis to begin testing all samples in California horse racing. AB 52 reinforces the Board action by requiring the Board to contract with the UC regents “to be the primary drug testing laboratory for any required equine drug testing.” The Maddy Laboratory currently handles only a third of the equine samples in California.

The Maddy Laboratory is one of the premier laboratories in the world and one of only two laboratories in horse racing accredited by the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation to the International Organization for Standardization standard. And as a research laboratory within the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, the Maddy Laboratory can deal with problems quickly and effectively. From its opening in 2000, the Maddy Laboratory has directed its efforts toward improving drug testing in California. They have been the leaders in developing state-of-the-art instrumental testing procedures. The testing panel permits the detection of over 800 compounds in every sample, which ensures that California horses are subjected to the most rigorous testing available. The laboratory's standard protocol meets the "super test" recommendations of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders' Association.

"(AB 52) will not only ensure a level playing field for the owners and trainers of racehorses, but will protect the integrity of this great sport and the fans that support it," Assembly Member Horton said Thursday after the bill cleared the Assembly. "Now more than ever, it is imperative that the California horse-racing industry continues to remain at the forefront of drug testing of racehorses."

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