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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD HEARS UPDATE ON JOCKEY HEALTH ISSUES

DEL MAR, CA – The California Horse Racing Board received an update Thursday on steps the horse-racing industry is taking to achieve a better understanding of the underlying health issues relating to the weights of jockeys and their physical conditions.

Barry Broad, an attorney for the Jockeys' Guild, said California Assemblyman Alberto Torrico introduced legislation (AB 1180) that would set the parameters for a peer-review study that is being designed to "take a snapshot" of what jockeys look like and to generate facts about jockey health issues upon which regulators may make informed policy decisions. The study will be financed by the horse-racing industry as part of a larger national study.

Broad said the study is at the "conceptual stage" right now, and he preferred not to speculate on what it might entail, though the goal is to "look at objective conditions, free of bias and based on factual measurements, to determine what a jockey looks like in terms of body composition."

California racing commissioners voted in April to endorse a scale of weights developed nationally by racing associations and horsemen. The Jockeys' Guild had asked the CHRB to raise the minimum weights even more. The commissioners indicated they would revisit the issue if the industry were to conduct a study of jockeys throughout the country to provide a more accurate understanding of jockey body types and health issues.

Craig Fravel, vice president of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, said the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, and other industry groups will be asked to support the national study.

Fravel said the purpose of the study is to "address this issue nationally on a scientific basis," and that as a peer-review study, occupational health officials and other experts in related health fields will scrutinize the study to determine its scientific validity.

Chairman John Harris stated it is very important, as part of the total process, to establish a better-defined protocol for periodic physical examinations for jockeys as well as a more-defined examination process for jockeys returning from injuries.

Commissioner Richard Shapiro said he has been in contact with the Association of Racing Commissioners International to generate support from other regulators for the national study.

Meanwhile, the CHRB is taking steps to rigorously enforce its existing regulations and policies pertaining to jockeys weighing out and in from races to ensure that the weight information being provided to the public is accurate.

CHRB Executive Director Ingrid Fermin said she has advised all of the steward panels in the state to “be a presence in the jockey’s room” when riders are weighing out for races, and she has instructed Board investigators to scrutinize the weighing-in process after riders finish the race. She personally met with the Del Mar stewards on Tuesday and asked them to “enforce the rules we have in place.”

In other business, the Board heard presentations from three totalizator companies outlining new wagering technology available to the horse-racing industry. Representatives of Scientific Games Systems, AmTote, and United Tote each provided graphic descriptions of modern, user-friendly wagering terminals and secure data processing systems, including wireless betting terminals that allow patrons to wager from their seats.

Scientific Games currently provides the totalizator services for all California racetracks and wagering facilities. Their five-year contract expires in September of 2006. All three totalizator companies expressed interest in the new contract, which will be negotiated with the racing associations.

The Board approved license applications for a thoroughbred meet at Bay Meadows (August 26 through October 16), the Los Angeles County Fair meet at Fairplex (September 9 through September 25), and a harness meet at Cal Expo (September 23 through December 30). The Cal Expo meet will be run by a new operator, the Sacramento Harness Association (SHA). Ralph Scurfield, a former CHRB chairman, is the president of SHA, and Christopher Schick is the general manager.

The Board approved a regulatory amendment to add additional requirements to the license application for horse-racing meets. One change requires more financial information and improved guarantees for the obligations of the licensee.

The Board authorized the Los Angeles Turf Club to distribute \$225,718 in charity-racing proceeds to 37 beneficiaries.

Chairman Harris, emphasizing the need for full disclosure to the public when horses are gelded, announced that CHRB regulations in this area will be vigorously enforced, and the sanctions could include scratching the horse from a race if the information is provided to the public after the wagering pools have opened.

Dr. Ron Jensen, the Board’s equine medical director, reported on a recent meeting of the CHRB Medication Committee. Dr. Jensen reported that he is working with the industry to establish a pilot program to implant microchips in horses racing in California, which will assist in tracking the horses for health, security, and inventory purposes.

Dr. Jensen is also working with an advisory panel to the Medication Committee to evaluate the penalty guidelines for medication guidelines that were developed by a national group. He said the California advisory panel is working out the complexities of adapting the proposed guidelines to meet California's needs.

The Board is moving forward with a regulation to ban long toe grabs, based on a recently completed study by Dr. Susan Stover at the University of California, Davis, and on previous studies that pointed to long toe grabs as contributing to serious injuries in horses. The research did not indicate a serious health risk with short toe grabs. Dr. Stover said the use of long toe grabs has been greatly reduced in recent years, largely because many horsemen have concluded for themselves that long toe grabs pose a danger to their horses.

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