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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD APPROVES 2006 CALIFORNIA HORSE-RACING CALENDAR

POMONA, CA – The California Horse Racing Board approved a 2006 racing calendar Thursday that largely mirrors this year's schedule in Southern California but makes significant changes in Northern California by switching dates at Bay Meadows and Golden Gate Fields, eliminating six-day race weeks at those two meets, and reducing some overlap with the fairs.

The approved schedule was developed during meetings of the Board's Race Dates Committee and with the support of the horse-racing industry. Commissioners Richard Shapiro and John Sperry, who serve on the Race Dates Committee, had originally intended to develop a three-year racing calendar extending through 2008, as long recommended by Commissioner Marie Moretti. However, uncertainties about the immediate future of racing at two of the state's largest venues – Hollywood Park and Bay Meadows – made a three-year calendar impractical at this point, according to Shapiro.

The revised Northern California calendar begins December 26, 2005, at Bay Meadows instead of at Golden Gate, as has been the custom in recent years. The Bay Meadows meet runs through February 5, moves to Golden Gate from February 8 through May 7, then returns to Bay Meadows (May 10 through June 18).

The fair circuit begins June 14 at Stockton, through June 25, and then proceeds to Pleasanton (June 28 through July 9), Vallejo (July 12 through July 24), Santa Rosa (July 26 through August 7), San Mateo (August 9 through August 23), Ferndale (August 10 through August 20), and Fresno (October 4 through October 15).

Golden Gate re-opens August 24 through October 15, and then the racing year ends where it started at Bay Meadows from October 18 through December 18.

Meanwhile, harness racing will be conducted in Northern California at Cal Expo from January 4 through July 29, and from September 22 through December 16. There is an opening for more harness racing, or for a fair meet, in Sacramento between those two scheduled harness meets. The State Fair Board is considering its options for that period, based largely on their evaluation of the just-concluded harness meet run at Cal Expo. That Board has pledged to make its wishes known to the CHRB within 30 days, and their decision could force the CHRB to revise the northern calendar.

The Southern California calendar begins as usual at Santa Anita Park on December 26, 2005, through April 23. The circuit moves to Hollywood Park from April 26 through July 16, then to Del Mar (July 19 through September 6), Pomona (September 8 through September 25), back to Santa Anita for the Oak Tree meet (September 27 through October 29), and finally to Hollywood Park for the fall meet (November 1 through December 18).

Quarter Horse racing is scheduled for Los Alamitos from December 26, 2005, through December 17, 2006.

“This calendar is designed to reduce overlap between meets and eliminate six-day weeks at the privately owned racing venues,” said Shapiro. “Furthermore, the industry has agreed to join us in the creation of an ad hoc committee that will begin meeting early next year to discuss additional ways to improve on this calendar.

“Racing has seen a disturbing trend since 1990. California on-track handle is way down by 59 percent. Attendance at California racetracks is down 35 percent. These numbers indicate an alarming decrease in on-track popularity and participation in horse racing.

“In considering future calendars, our desire will be to look for ways to increase on-track handle, increase on-track attendance, and to turn the tide and rejuvenate interest in horse racing.”

In other business, the Board authorized the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club to distribute \$179,000 in charity day proceeds to 23 beneficiaries, including \$35,700 to benefit disabled jockeys. More than 75 percent of the proceeds will be going to equine-related charities.

The CHRB staff provided an end-of-meet outline summary for four meets: Capitol Racing at Cal Expo (122 days of harness racing) from January 7 through July 20; Sonoma County Fair (12 days of mixed-breed racing) from July 27 through August 8; San Mateo County Fair (14 days, mixed breed) from August 10 through August 25; and Humboldt County Fair (10 days, mixed breed) from August 11 through August 21.

All attendance and handle numbers at the spring harness meet were down considerably from the previous year except for Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW, account wagering), which increased nearly 10 percent. Both average daily on-track handle and attendance were down more than 25 percent.

The handle and attendance figures for the three fair meets were higher in most categories, including approximately 11 percent increases in average daily handle at San Mateo and Humboldt, where ADW also was up more than 37 percent.

“It’s nice to see some positive changes taking place,” said CHRB Chairman John Harris, who noted that business also was higher at Del Mar, and the figures are up dramatically at the current Fairplex meet. “Perhaps we are seeing the start of a trend.”