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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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CHRB TAKES OVER TCO2 TESTING PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO, CA – Responsibility for testing for high bicarbonate levels in racehorses will shift from the industry to the California Horse Racing Board beginning Wednesday, October 19, meaning that in addition to the ongoing detention-barn program for offenders, licensees whose horses test over the limit for alkalizing substances could face fines and suspensions, and any purse money earned in those races would be automatically forfeited.

Racing associations and fairs, in partnership with horsemen, have been testing horses for excess total carbon dioxide (TCO₂), which is indicative of “milkshaking,” a procedure believed to increase the endurance of some horses. Whenever the TCO₂ level has gone above 37 millimoles per liter of blood serum or plasma taken from a horse, all horses entered to run by that trainer have been placed in a detention setting, where they have been kept under video surveillance for 24 hours before their races. In the past 12 months, no horse held under video surveillance has produced a high TCO₂ value.

The CHRB adopted a regulation in January to establish its own TCO₂ testing program to complement its more extensive equine drug-testing program, which tests for more than 800 drug substances using state-of-the-art technology at the Kenneth L. Maddy Laboratory at the University of California-Davis. But because TCO₂ differs in some critical aspects to the other testing, a change in the law was considered necessary before the new regulation could take effect.

Beginning next week, the CHRB will test all horses at the Santa Anita and Golden Gate Fields thoroughbred tracks and will test standardbreds randomly at Cal Expo. The blood samples required for testing will be collected at the receiving barn shortly before the horses compete at the thoroughbred meets. The standardbred samples will be collected after the race.

Trainers will have the option of having a duplicate sample collected at the same time the primary sample is collected, but tested by a different laboratory at their own expense. The \$165 cost for the collection and testing of a duplicate sample must be paid in advance. The form for requesting a duplicate sample must be submitted by 10 a.m. the day of the race for afternoon programs and by 4 p.m. for night programs. Trainers will be required to obtain the request form when the horse is entered.

If the primary sample tested at the Maddy Laboratory contains excessive levels of TCO₂, and the finding is not refuted by a negative finding of a duplicate sample tested at either Iowa State University or Ohio State University (if requested), a complaint will be filed against the trainer and against any other licensees implicated by the evidence. While the case is being processed, the CHRB will have horses entered by that trainer placed in a detention barn provided by the racing association.

Either the stewards or an administrative law judge will hear the case, and the possible sanctions include disqualification, fine, and suspension. Excessive TCO₂ is considered a Class 3 violation in the seven-level classification system for unauthorized drug substances used by the CHRB. Under California law, violations involving Class 1 (the most serious), Class 2, and Class 3 substances automatically require the horse to be disqualified from earning any purse money in the race, in which case the forfeited money is redistributed based on the revised order of finish.

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