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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD CONSIDERS JOCKEY SAFETY ISSUES

DEL MAR, CA – The California Horse Racing Board began public discussions Thursday on several proposed regulatory amendments to provide greater safety for jockeys, as required by a new law (AB 1180) designed to safeguard the interests, health, and safety of jockeys riding in California.

The Board is considering whether to require the use of safety reins for all breeds in the state in order to protect jockeys and exercise riders as well as drivers in harness racing. When conventional reins break, control of the horse is lost. A safety rein is essentially a rein within a rein – a nylon cord woven into the fabric of conventional reins and attached independently to the bit – so that if the leather reins break, riders and drivers still have the nylon cord to maintain control.

Developed by Art Gray and his associates and patented under the name Sure Lines Inc., the safety reins feature adds approximately \$15 to the cost of manufacturing reins, which typically retail for about \$75. Gray advised the racing commissioners that his safety reins have been certified by a testing laboratory as providing additional strength to conventional reins. However, he said safety reins are designed to break when stepped on by a horse, so as to prevent injury to the horse and rider.

Darrell Haire, interim manager of the Jockeys' Guild, said his organization "strongly supports" a requirement for safety reins.

"Every rider has had the reins break at one time or another, either in the morning or during a race, and it's one of the scariest things that can happen," said Haire. "You could be in the middle of the field going 35 miles an hour and you want to jump off – it's that scary. You talk to any rider, he or she is going to support safety reins."

CHRB Chairman Richard B. Shapiro said he received a call from retired jockey Chris McCarron early Thursday morning, who told him safety reins would be "better for jockeys overall."

The only opposition to safety reins was expressed harness horsemen. Ben Kenney, president of the California Harness Horsemen's Association, indicated in a written communication, "It is rare that a driver's lines break." He said horsemen check their equipment carefully. He also cited concerns about the cost of replacing all of the reins in a barn.

The commissioners agreed to put out the proposal for a 45-day public comment period, which will be followed by a public hearing, in order to hear from all interested parties and to give the CHRB staff time to conduct additional research. If approved, California would become the first racing jurisdiction in the country to make safety reins a requirement.

Another section of AB 1180 deals with the reporting of on-track accidents. The stewards currently report on-track accidents in their minutes. The law expands their responsibility by requiring them to fully investigate on-track accidents involving jockeys and to fully report their findings to the Jockeys' Guild and others with an interest in the matter. The amendment would require the stewards to provide the circumstances of the accident, the likely causes, and the extent of any injuries to the jockey. The commissioners also approved this proposal for 45-day public comment.

The commissioners discussed a third safety-related matter not related to AB 1180. The current regulation requires jockeys and riders to wear a safety vest when exercising horses or competing in a race, and the regulation sets a standard for the vests. However, that standard is out of date, and the proposed amendment would establish newer standards that provide increased protection. The commissioners approved this proposal for 45-day notice as well.

In future meetings, the Board will consider other proposals required by AB 1180, including a review of all on-track first aid facilities and the ambulance services provided during racing programs and during training hours.

In other business, the Board approved the license application for the Los Angeles County Fair to conduct a race meet at Fairplex Park in Pomona from September 8 through September 25. Fairplex President James Henwood advised the commissioners that purses would increase 5 percent for the meet based on a windfall from the record-breaking 2005 meet.

Commissioner John Amerman, newly appointed to the CHRB by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and attending his first monthly meeting, asked Henwood and Equine Manager George Bradvica about their plans to promote the upcoming meet in order to keep the momentum going. Henwood responded that direct advertising for the Fair is being increased by \$300,000 this year (from \$1 million to \$1.3 million). Bradvica described a marketing program that includes an increased emphasis on group sales and efforts to make attending the races more of a social event.

The Board also approved the license for the Pacific Racing Association to conduct a meet at Golden Gate fields from August 24 through October 15. During this discussion, Ron Charles, executive director of Magna Entertainment California Operations, reported that Magna Chairman Frank Stronach is personally reviewing the various brands of synthetic surfaces on the market. Charles said Golden Gate Fields would be in full compliance with the new CHRB regulation requiring the installation of synthetic surfaces by the end of next year at all California racetracks with four weeks or more of continuous thoroughbred racing.

In another matter pertaining to synthetic surfaces, the Board approved for 45-day public comment a proposal to amend the license application in order to add a new section that would require an association to provide details about the surface installed, including a full description of the drainage system, which must be certified by an independent consulting engineer as being adequate to provide drainage for projected rainfall.

The Board began the process of establishing a conflict of interest policy for commissioners, many of whom own racehorses that compete in California. Commissioner John Harris explained, "We

need to determine what policies are in place at other state agencies.” Executive Director Ingrid Fermin said that review already has begun.

Describing the totalizator technology at California racetracks as “obsolete,” Chairman Shapiro asked the industry about their plans to deal with tote problems and provide “more efficient, fan-friendly equipment.”

Craig Fravel, Executive Vice President of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, said the industry has a working committee that is developing a request for proposals for a new totalizator contract but “we are nine months away at the very least from implementing a new system.” However, Fravel said Del Mar spent \$85,000 to install a wireless infrastructure in the grandstand before the start of the current meet, so that Del Mar can experiment with new hand-held wagering devices, and if the test is successful, “the California Marketing Committee hopefully will begin to market the devices year-round” at all California racetracks.

Terry McWilliams, vice president of sales for Scientific Games, which has the current totalizator contract in California, said his company will be testing other new equipment beginning in September in both Northern and Southern California, and the new terminals will have an “improved interface” for bettors, including access to handicapping information and the ability to transfer money from the user’s bank to an on-track account.

The Board authorized the Pacific Racing Association to distribute \$53,637 in charity racing proceeds to 12 beneficiaries and authorized Chairman Shapiro to approve the distribution of \$262,791 by the Los Angeles Turf Club to 37 beneficiaries, subject to his review of the distribution list.

The Board approved a request by the California Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Foundation to appoint three new directors – Robert Bean, Barbara Scurfield, and Dr. Randall Browning – and to reappoint a current Board member, Dr. Rick Arthur.

The Board authorized Fermin to consider on a case-by-case basis any requests received from fair meets to uncouple horses with common ownership. Meanwhile, information about the recently concluded uncoupling experiment at Hollywood Park and previously at Bay Meadows will be reviewed by the CHRB Pari-Mutuel Operations Committee, along with information from the ongoing experiment at Los Alamitos, which will conclude August 17.

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