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**CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD**

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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**VOLUNTARY MICROCHIP PROGRAM UNDERWAY**

SACRAMENTO, CA – Under a no-cost-to-the-owner, voluntary program approved by the California Horse Racing Board utilizing federal grants, microchips have been implanted in almost 500 thoroughbreds at Southern California racetracks over the last two months for health, security, and inventory purposes, and there is sufficient funding for another 3,500 horses, or roughly a third of the thoroughbreds that race in Southern California during any 12-month period.

The director of the pilot program, Dr. Amy Nevens, implanted the first chips on July 12 at Hollywood Park in the barns of Richard and Gary Mandella. Since then, dozens of other trainers and owners have participated in the program. The microchip, which is the size of a grain of rice, is implanted at the crest of the neck just below the mane, the internationally recognized microchip implantation site. The microchip implantation procedure only takes a few seconds; confirming the identity of the horse prior to microchipping takes most of the time, though no more than a few minutes. Only one person from the stable is needed to assist Dr. Nevens with the procedure.

There have been no problems in the 500 horses implanted to date. This mimics the experience of Dr. Gregory Ferraro at the University of California at Davis, who has used microchips for several years to identify and track horses at the Center for Equine Health.

Each microchip is identified by a unique number, which can be read with a hand-held scanner. The microchip identification number for each horse is transmitted to the Jockey Club to be included in the horse's registration records. Most horses imported from Europe already have been microchipped. In those cases, Dr. Nevens records the microchip identification number and transmits that data to the Jockey Club.

The microchips in the CHRB program have the advantage of a temperature sensor within the microchip that can be read with the scanner. Several trainers are using the scanners to monitor the temperature of their horses.

The CHRB and racing associations hope the microchips eventually will allow for the quick and accurate identification of horses entering and leaving restricted areas. Ultimately, this technology will be available to all aspects of the racing and breeding industry and will facilitate horse identification and record keeping. For the near future, the microchips are in addition to the lip tattoos and individual markings historically used to identify horses.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) approved \$400,000 for the program

using grants from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The CDFA is evaluating the effectiveness of the microchips in identifying and tracking the movements of thoroughbreds at Southern California racetracks. The program is part of the National Animal Identification System's effort to quickly locate and identify infected and exposed animals during disease outbreaks. The funding originates from the Department of Homeland Security and is part of a national effort to prepare the country for bioterrorism assault.

Thoroughbred owners and trainers in Southern California wishing to participate in the program should contact Dr. Nevens at 626-255-0087.

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