

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 263-6000  
Fax (916) 263-6042  
[www.chrb.ca.gov](http://www.chrb.ca.gov)

## CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD



Los Alamitos Race Course  
4961 E. Katella Avenue  
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Contact: Mike Marten  
(714) 820-2748  
Cell: (714) 240-1870  
Fax (714) 821-6232

CHRB NEWS RELEASE

MAY 23, 2008

## BOARD ACTS ON STEROIDS, PROTECTING HORSES

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board acted Tuesday to reclassify anabolic steroids, so that penalties will be far more severe for anyone using steroids on horses under racing conditions, in a move that CHRB Chairman Richard B. Shapiro said adds to a growing list of efforts by the State of California to protect horses, riders, and the integrity of horse racing.

“This is an easy one,” the chairman later added. “Anabolic steroids have no place in competition sports, including horse racing. Period! End!”

The steroids reclassifications, which will be immediately posted for 45-day public notice prior to a July 17 public hearing at Del Mar, go hand-in-hand with a larger regulatory package of penalties and classification changes. That larger package has been slowly moving through the regulatory process and is expected to be fully in place before the Breeders’ Cup, which will be hosted by the Oak Tree Racing Association at Santa Anita Park this October 24-25.

Both the chairman and Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB equine medical director, listed the new anabolic steroids regulations among the steps being taken to protect the integrity of the game and provide for the safest possible racing environment for horses and riders. Towards that end, they enumerated some of the steps that have been taken and continue in practice in California:

- **More extensive pre-race examinations of all horses entered to run.** Each horse is examined at a jog and palpated by an official veterinarian, who has an examination history from previous pre-race inspections and post-race evaluations on each horse. These examination cards could be replaced in the near future by a more comprehensive computerized system that eventually could include the entire medical history of each horse. A version of the program was tested during the recent Bay Meadows meet.
- **Increased scrutiny of horses as they make their way to the race.** All horses are examined again at the receiving barn and they are observed as they warm up on the track. The stewards, outriders, jockeys, and other racing officials are encouraged to notify the on-site track veterinarian if they observe or suspect any problems with any horse warming up for the race.

- **Improved racing surfaces.** The CHRB mandate for synthetic surfaces at all major thoroughbred racetracks in the state clearly demonstrates the Board’s commitment to protecting racing participants. Preliminary data shows that racing fatalities have declined by 50 percent in the state for horses racing on synthetic surfaces when compared to the same ovals when they were dirt tracks. A data base is being developed to track the effectiveness of these tracks for racing and training purposes.
- **State-of-the-art drug testing at the Board’s primary laboratory.** The Ken Maddy Equine Analytical Laboratory at UC Davis uses the most sensitive and precise instrumental screening available, which can identify more than 800 compounds. The CHRB testing programs are as demanding and sensitive as any in horse racing. All horses also are pre-race tested for carbon dioxide levels to insure a level playing field. The Maddy Lab uses the most advanced methodology for detecting steroid levels above those naturally occurring in the horse, and with the adoption of new regulations, the CHRB is well positioned to monitor the use of steroids.
- **A necropsy program that generates information used to prevent catastrophic injuries in horses.** California has the most comprehensive necropsy program in the United States. Early findings by this program at UC Davis led to the installation of nuclear scintigraphy equipment at California racetracks, which is a powerful tool to identify problems at earlier stages. The program also identified horseshoe “toe grabs” as a contributing factor to injuries, which led to the CHRB prohibition of long “toe grabs” in thoroughbred racing. Additional research studies are being undertaken in an effort to prevent injuries to racehorses.

“California has been a shining light for the racing industry,” said Dr. Arthur, while indicating the efforts would continue as the Board identifies additional ways to further protect horses and riders, including probable improvements to veterinarian’s list procedures.

Vice Chairman John Harris agreed, “California has a very level playing field. California has demonstrated its concern about horse welfare.”

Chairman Shapiro added that the effort would be continuing. “In the future we’ll be looking at inbreeding and some of the other possible contributors we might consider as adding to the frailty of racehorses today.”

The Board previously banned all steroids except for boldenone, nandrolone, stanozolol, and testosterone, and established very low threshold levels for those four anabolic steroids, three of which are endogenous or naturally occurring in the horse. Any administration of those steroids close to a race will be detected and will result in a violation. The Board action Tuesday began the process of reclassifying those four anabolic steroids, so that violations will result in the disqualification of the horse and redistribution of the purse, and those involved would face minimum 30-day suspensions for first offenses. This regulatory process should be completed in September.

In other business, the Board delayed consideration of a request by the racing fairs to increase the takeout by 1 percent on wagers placed on California fair races. The proposal from the California Authority of Racing Fairs on behalf of the Alameda, San Mateo, Solano, Sonoma, Fresno, San Joaquin, and Humboldt County Fairs follows passage of a law last year authorizing an additional 1 percent for the maintenance and improvement of the fairs' racetrack facilities, subject to CHRB approval.

Those fairs handled \$126 million in 2007, including wagers placed outside of California on those fair races, so an additional 1 percent of takeout could result in \$1.2 million for the improvements fund, assuming handle does not drop off and the additional takeout can be recouped from the out-of-state jurisdictions. CARF representatives said all of the fairs had agreed to earmark all of the initial revenue from the additional takeout for improvements in Pleasanton as it evolves into a year-round training facility in response to the imminent closure of Bay Meadows.

While strongly endorsing the need to improve fair racing facilities, some of the Board members questioned whether the additional 1 percent would be sufficient to accomplish that goal. They also requested a comprehensive business plan with details on how the new revenue would be spent at Pleasanton and elsewhere. This matter will be discussed again at the Board's next meeting on June 19 at Golden Gate Fields.

The Board approved the license application for fair meets in Vallejo (11 days, July 9-21) and Santa Rosa (12 days, July 23-August 4), but only after intensive questioning on why the two fairs had abandoned the experiment of a combined meet known as "Sonoma Solano Wine Country Racing."

In the ensuing discussion, Commissioner Jesse Choper cited the need for a comprehensive plan for horse racing in California, which "requires a certain amount of specialized knowledge, a collection of data, analysis of that input, and finally a determination of where we need to go. I don't have all the answers, but we need to make the effort. We need to begin a full consideration of the issue of what I might call revenue sourcing."

Chairman Shapiro assured Commissioner Choper and Commissioner John Amerman, who expressed similar views, that such a comprehensive discussion would take place, perhaps at a special meeting convened solely for that purpose.

The Board approved the license application for the thoroughbred meet at Del Mar (July 16 through September 3), with the exception of the Advance Deposit Wagering portion of the application. Del Mar has begun discussions with ADW providers to extend an experiment – beyond its scheduled July 13 conclusion – through the Del Mar meet and perhaps the end of the year. The current experiment allows all ADW account holders to wager on all California races.

Del Mar Executive Vice President Craig Fravel discussed changes relating to the synthetic surface that was installed prior to the 2007 meet. Racing fatalities on the new surface dropped dramatically last year, but there were concerns about how the track changed in terms of performance from the morning to the afternoon. Fravel said a “softer wax” has been added to help address this issue, in addition to a different watering schedule. He said Racing Secretary Tom Robbins is “excited about the way we’ve improved the track” from a performance standpoint.

The Board adopted a rule allowing a horse returning from a layoff of at least 180 days to be entered into a claiming race in which it will be ineligible to be claimed, just the one time, as long as the horse is entered at a claiming level equal to or greater than the price for which it last started. The purpose of this rule is to encourage owners to give horses needed time off.

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