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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD TOUGHENS STANCE ON STEROIDS

DEL MAR – The California Horse Racing Board is stepping up enforcement efforts to protect the wagering public with increased pre-race and out-of-competition testing and by prohibiting horses from running for 30 days after they've been administered anabolic steroids, effective this Friday, August 22.

“We mean business!” said an obviously angry CHRB Chairman Richard B. Shapiro during Tuesday's meeting of the Medication Committee following a report from the Board's equine medical director that some trainers are continuing to administer anabolic steroids prior to the penalties becoming far more severe on September 4.

“We will have no sympathy for any owners or trainers who flaunt our rules,” agreed Vice Chairman John Harris, who serves on the Medication Committee with Chairman Shapiro.

None of the owners or trainers was identified during the meeting.

The CHRB has been phasing in the new prohibition of anabolic steroids in racing horses and the penalties for violations in order to give horsemen fair notice and to allow sufficient time for any previously administered anabolic steroids to completely leave the systems of horses racing in California.

The process of adopting these new regulations has been in the works for more than a year, and discussed at numerous public meetings. On May 12, the CHRB issued an advisory informing all trainers that testing for anabolic steroids would commence on July 1, and they were advised to stop using those drugs. Any owner or trainer who had a horse test above permitted levels for nandrolone, boldenone, stanozolol, or testosterone during July was sent an unofficial notice of a potential Class 4 violation. Those unofficial notices advised owners and trainers to review their medication procedures and referred the licensees to previous CHRB anabolic steroids advisories.

On August 1, the CHRB began official enforcement of all regulations for nandrolone, boldenone, stanozolol, and testosterone as written. This step was clearly announced in another CHRB advisory/directive, which was widely reported by the news media. The final phase comes September 4 when penalties will increase for reclassified (Class 3) nandrolone, boldenone, stanozolol, and testosterone. Violations will result in the automatic forfeiture of purse money, and licensees will face possible suspensions and fines.

Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB equine medical director, reported Tuesday that from 418 tests for anabolic steroids performed in July at Hollywood Park and Del Mar, 38 contained testosterone, nandrolone, stanozolol, or boldenone in excess of authorized levels, and of those, 28 involved two trainers. Significantly, Dr. Arthur also reported that in the last week, anabolic steroids were being administered within three days of racing. He emphasized that with the exception of two trainers, the compliance rate on the Southern California thoroughbred circuit is 97 percent.

“They’re not naïve,” said Chairman Shapiro, who later added, “It’s shameful that two or three people have taken an abusive approach for personal gain at the expense of the rest of the industry.” He further noted that “97 percent of owners and trainers complied with our rules, and they deserve praise, not to be disadvantaged by a few people who chose to ignore the rules.”

Historically, the analysis of blood and urine samples has taken place days after the horses raced, but last year the CHRB also began testing horses in training that were not yet entered to run. Now the Board will be stepping up its use of out-of-competition testing in order to stop violations and protect the public.

The CHRB maintains a list of sick and injured horses, which is commonly known as the vet’s list. Horses on this list are not eligible to compete in races, and they must demonstrate their complete recovery before they can be taken off of the list. Anabolic steroids are approved by the FDA for use in sick or debilitated horses. State law requires a legitimate medical purpose to prescribe anabolic steroids and further prohibits their use for the purpose of enhancing athletic performance. CHRB anabolic steroid regulations permit the administration of anabolic steroids to sick horses to aid their recovery, but anabolic steroids are not permitted for racing purposes. Therefore, beginning August 22, any horse administered anabolic steroids will be placed on the official CHRB Veterinarian’s List for 30 days.

“During their recovery period, those horses will not be allowed to race,” said Chairman Shapiro. “This is reasonable in all respects. It protects the horse, the other participants, and the public.

“It is a shame,” he added, “that apparently a few owners and trainers are not in keeping with the spirit of the industry and the public to abolish steroids.”

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