

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 263-6000
Fax (916) 263-6042

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

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STUDIES COULD LEAD TO IMPROVED TRACK SAFETY

ARCADIA, CA – The California Horse Racing Board is coordinating a range of studies to gain a better understanding of racing surfaces and determine any relationships between racing surfaces and equine injuries in order to improve those surfaces, reduce injuries, and meet the CHRB's statutory obligation to develop track safety standards for the protection of horses and riders.

CHRB Executive Director Kirk Breed outlined the project in a report to the racing commissioners Thursday at Santa Anita Park. Among the key points:

- Subject to funding approval, the Board will contract, equip, and train personnel for the continual inspection of all racing surfaces (dirt, turf, and synthetic), which will include monitoring maintenance practices and measuring such variables as moisture content, track surface composition, and temperature. These objective track measurements eventually will be correlated to injuries. Dr. Mick Peterson of the University of Maine is consulting on this aspect of the study. The Board has named a safety steward for each racetrack to assist in this effort.
- The project will make extensive use of the new equine injury reporting database provided through The Jockey Club's Incompass system, which records numerous racing and training data, as well as the surfaces on which reported injuries occur, official Veterinarian's List histories, and certain medication records. Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB equine medical director, has been working on this project and provided a preliminary report to the CHRB Medication Committee in November. He reiterated some of those comments Thursday.
- Private veterinarians will be asked to confidentially provide information about racehorse injuries that do not normally come to the attention of the official veterinarian and get recorded in the Incompass database. This is a stand-alone project headed by Dr. Wayne McIlwraith of Colorado State University and Dr. Jeff Blea, a practicing veterinarian who serves as president of the Southern California Equine Foundation. The Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation is considering funding this study.
- Biomechanical testing will be conducted. This involves the use of a machine

specifically designed to simulate the action of a hoof striking the surface and/or an instrumented shoe on a horse, both of which can measure such variables as surface compaction, the degree of slide, and where energy is released. Dr. Petersen developed the testing machine, which has been used on California tracks. Dr. Susan Stover, director of the J.D. Wheat Orthopedic Research Laboratory at the University of California, Davis, has used the instrumented shoe at Keeneland.

- The project will include information generated by various programs at the University of California at Davis, including the Postmortem Program and Dr. Stover's program, providing more in-depth medical histories of racing fatalities.
- The official horseshoe inspector at Santa Anita Park has been keeping records of the various types of shoes worn by horses as they reach the receiving barn in advance of a race. This practice will be formalized, better documented, and expanded to other racetracks, so that the shoeing information can be incorporated into the larger project and correlated to racing injuries.
- A pre-race examination database, which will contain all of the information noted by official veterinarians during the required examination of horses entered to race, is being established. When correlated to subsequent injuries, this information could help identify findings indicating horses at greater risk of injury.

Concerning the study of racing surfaces, the Board has requested a budget appropriation to develop safety standards for racing surfaces. This money would come from a special Race Track Security Fund, which is funded from uncashed vouchers. It is not General Fund money. None of the CHRB budget comes from the General Fund. The CHRB budget comes from revenue generated by the horse-racing industry. In fact, horse racing generates money for the General Fund. In developing the standards, Breed and Dr. Arthur will coordinate the collection and development of this data, which will require the participation of stewards, veterinarians, investigators, UC Davis, horsemen's organizations, racing associations, and synthetic surface purveyors.

In the presentation Thursday, Dr. Arthur reported horse racing is losing approximately 3 to 4 percent of its horse population each month. The national cost is estimated at \$100 million monthly. It is not known how many of these horses lost to racing were injured or retired because they were non-competitive, sent to breed, or entered non-racing careers.

The commissioners asked Dr. Arthur questions about injuries on synthetic surfaces, which were installed at California's major thoroughbred racetracks under a Board mandate. He responded that the data collected to date has been most reliable for determining racing fatalities, not lesser injuries, though the injury data will improve as the studies go forward. His most recent analysis through June 2008 showed a decrease in racing fatalities on synthetic surfaces compared with the dirt surfaces they replaced. Dr. Arthur is preparing an updated report for the latter half of 2008.

In other business, the Board finalized the 2009 racing calendar by allocating the week of July

22-26 to the Solano County Fair in Vallejo, as recommended by the Thoroughbred Owners of California and other industry stakeholders in Northern California following their negotiations. Historically, Vallejo has run two weeks of racing. With the concurrence of the Solano County Fair Board, in November the racing commissioners allocated one of those two weeks of racing to the Alameda County Fair, while delaying action on the second week pending further discussions.

John Vasquez, chairman of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, attended the meeting Thursday to indicate his board's desire for a full two weeks of racing in Vallejo this year and in the future. However, given that one of those weeks already was allocated to Pleasanton without objection, the racing commissioners voted to allocate just the one week to Vallejo this year, while recommending that the industry meet with representatives of the Solano County Board of Supervisors to discuss the prospect of continued racing at the Solano fairgrounds for years to come.

At the request of the Jockeys' Guild and the California Horsemen's Safety Alliance, the Board tabled a proposal to mandate the use of safety reins at California racetracks in order to allow time for the development of an ASTM standard for the safety reins that can be incorporated into the regulatory language.

The Board authorized for public notice three proposed regulatory amendments relating to the construction and use of whips in harness racing. The texts for these three proposed amendments will be posted on the CHRB website (www.chrb.ca.gov) next month. The Board will conduct a public hearing on these proposals in March or April.

The Board deferred action on a proposal to prohibit toe grabs greater than two millimeters in height on the front shoes of thoroughbred horses running in a race. The current limit is four millimeters.

The Board deferred action on a request to revoke an exemption granted in 1994 to the Alameda County Fair pertaining to the location of a golf course within the infield of the Pleasanton racetrack. The fair is in the process of determining whether additional netting could be installed to prevent golf balls from reaching the racetrack.

Staff reported that the 2009 steward assignments are listed on the CHRB website (under *calendars*), and brief bios on each steward soon will be posted on the site.

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