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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD CONSIDERS JOCKEY WEIGHT ISSUES

DEL MAR, CA – The California Horse Racing Board expressed support Thursday for the concept of ensuring the health and safety of jockeys by setting minimum limits for body fat and the weight horses must carry in races, but the individual commissioners varied in their approaches to dealing with these issues and asked the staff to present revised regulations for consideration at the next Board meeting in September.

The commissioners heard approximately two hours of testimony during the monthly Board meeting concerning proposals by the Jockeys' Guild to establish a minimum weight of 118 pounds for jockeys riding in thoroughbred and Arabian races and 123 pounds for Appaloosa, Paints, Quarter Horse, and mule races. All clothing and equipment would be weighed separately and not be included in the minimum weight calculation. The Guild also proposes that jockeys licensed after January 1, 2004, must maintain a body fat content of not less than 5 percent.

Jockeys and others supporting the proposed rules cited medical evidence that drastic weight-reduction methods cause severe damage to the body. The racing commissioners agreed with these findings and expressed unanimous support for that part of the proposal concerning minimum body fat, so that jockeys will not reduce to a point at which they might suffer serious health consequences. They also endorse efforts to educate riders about proper nutrition and eating habits.

Much of the debate focused on the proposal to establish a minimum weight of 118 pounds for jockeys in thoroughbred races and how much the clothing and equipment actually weighs that horses would carry in addition to those 118 pounds. The jockeys and other proponents who spoke minimized the effect that additional weight would have on horses. But several trainers testified that any additional weight would have an adverse effect on horses.

The commissioners were somewhat divided on whether California should take the lead and be the first state to adopt the Guild proposals or if California should await some national resolution.

Guild Chairwoman Tomey Swan told the commissioners, "This is a small thing for you to do but it would have a tremendous impact on the quality of life for jockeys."

But horsemen and racing executives expressed concern that increasing the weights horses carry in California would prompt some owners to run those horses elsewhere if the rules were not in place in other jurisdictions as well. Representatives of Magna Entertainment Corp. and Churchill Downs Inc. said they are having discussions between themselves and the New York Racing Association to develop "house rules" that could deal with these issues on a national basis.

Following the public testimony, CHRB Chairman John Harris asked the staff to “come up with another proposal” that satisfies the concerns of the commissioners. He for one said he wants to eliminate the “grandfather clause,” so that all jockeys are included in the changes, including those licensed before January 1. He also wants to review the recommendations of the American Dietary Association on this issue.

The Board will consider the staff revisions at the next meeting September 15 at Fairplex Park in Pomona.

In other action, the Board began the process of amending regulations to conform with the initial recommendations of the Racing Medication and Racing Consortium, making California among the first jurisdictions to bring its regulations in line with the RMTC – a national organization composed of industry representatives, charged with developing uniform national medication rules, policies, and testing procedures. Among other things, the amendments will provide that veterinarians shall not have contact with an entered horse on race day except for the administration of furosemide or other bleeder medications unless approved by the official veterinarian.

The Board approved the 2005 racing calendar for the harness, Quarter Horse, and Northern California thoroughbred and fair dates but delayed action on the Southern California thoroughbred allocation. As approved, the northern thoroughbred calendar will begin December 26, 2004, at Golden Gate Fields with a meet that runs through January 30, 2005, followed by meets at Bay Meadows (February 2 through May 8) and Golden Gate (May 11 through June 19), then resuming following the fair season at Bay Meadows (September 3 through October 16) before concluding at Golden Gate (October 19 through December 19).

Concerned that six-day race weeks might overtax the horse population and reduce field sizes, Chairman Harris objected to authorizing Wednesday racing programs in the north following holidays on January 17, February 21, and October 10, but the majority of the Board favored authorizing those racing programs. However, in approving a motion by Vice Chairman Roger Licht, the Board granted the members of the Race Dates Committee – Commissioners Sheryl Granzella and Marie Moretti – authority to rescind those dates if data convinces them it would be in the best interest of racing.

The northern fair schedule will begin June 15 in Stockton with a 10-day meet running through June 26, followed by meets at Pleasanton (June 29 through July 10), Vallejo (July 13 through July 25), Santa Rosa (July 27 through August 8), San Mateo (August 10 through August 22), Humboldt (August 11 through August 21), Sacramento (August 24 through September 5), and Fresno (October 5 through October 16).

The Quarter Horse meet at Los Alamitos will run from December 26, 2004, through December 18, 2005. The Board allocated harness dates for Cal Expo from December 26, 2004, through July 30, 2005, and will consider the harness date allocation for the latter half of 2005 later this year after more is learned about the status of that facility.

The Race Dates Committee proposed a calendar for the Southern California thoroughbred circuit that would have Santa Anita opening December 26, 2004, and running for 17 weeks ending April 18, with the balance of the calendar looking fairly much the same as usual. However, representatives of Santa Anita objected to the proposed calendar, which included one less weekend of racing in Arcadia. Instead, they offered their own proposal to run for 17 weeks with 17 full weekends. This alternative from Santa Anita would lead to other changes in the calendar as the meets follow one after another through the year. The racing commissioners said they needed more time to consider this issue. The southern race dates allocation will be reconsidered at the September 15 meeting.

The Board approved license applications for race meets operated by the Oak Tree Racing Association at Santa Anita from September 29 through October 31 and the Fresno District Fair from October 6 through October 17.

The Board authorized the distribution of \$60,000 in Charity Days proceeds by the Pacific Racing Association to 12 beneficiaries and the distribution of \$262,800 by the Los Angeles Turf Club to 44 beneficiaries. Approximately 80 percent of those proceeds will go to industry-related organizations.

CHRB Executive Director Roy Wood reported that the Board is providing requested information to the California Performance Review Commission. He encouraged the industry to fully cooperate with the Commission.

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