

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

JULY 8, 2008

CHRB SEEKS COMMENT ON SHOETING REGULATION

SACRAMENTO, CA – Should horses be allowed to run without shoes if a trainer feels the horse might perform better unshod? The California Horse Racing Board will be considering this option July 17 at Del Mar and is soliciting comments from the public by July 14.

The issue was first raised by the California Thoroughbred Trainers at a meeting of the CHRB Medication Committee last November. CTT Executive Director Ed Halpern indicated there had been sentiment among some trainers “for a long time to allow horses to race unshod, but with the introduction of synthetic tracks, the idea has gained support for moving forward. Some horses are more comfortable without shoes.”

Dr. Diane Isbell, one of the CHRB’s official veterinarians, provided some details during a special meeting on February 20 that focused on synthetic surfaces. Dr. Isbell, was among seven veterinarians on a panel that discussed the safety of synthetic surfaces in terms of injuries to horses.

“We have much sounder horses (on the synthetic surface at Golden Gate Fields) and I’m finding that we have a lot less joint filling in the horses on pre-race (examinations) than we do when we have the sealed surfaces,” explained Dr. Isbell, who went on to say, “What we’ve found with the synthetic surfaces is the foot does not have the slip that it had with the dirt surface.”

Dr. Isbell continued, “A number of trainers in Northern California are starting to train their horses barefoot. There are an increasing number of trainers doing that (and those horses are) working as well or better as they did when they had shoes on. We do know from research work that the bare foot is better able to utilize the internal shock absorption system of the horse, which does help to take some of the stress off the legs.”

Dr. Isbell later added, “We have an opportunity to make some beneficial changes for our horses, and there is something that the Board could do and could do very quickly that would be quite beneficial for the welfare of our horses, and that is to allow (horses) to race barefoot. I would urge you to make that a priority and get that done as soon as possible.”

The official program will note when any horse adds or removes shoes. To date, the CHRB has heard no testimony in opposition to allowing horses to race unshod. Written comments should be addressed to: Harold Coburn, Regulation Analyst, California Horse Racing Board, 1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300. Sacramento, CA 95825. For additional details, he can be reached at (916) 263-6397 or Fax: (916) 263-6022 or e-mail (harolda@chrb.ca.gov).

The public hearing will be held July 17 in the Surfside Room simulcast wagering facility on the Del Mar fairgrounds. The Board meeting will begin at 10 a.m. A full agenda for the meeting is available on the CHRB website (www.chrb.ca.gov). The audio of the meeting can be heard through a link on the CHRB website.

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