

## BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY

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**CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD**

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TO: CALIFORNIA HORSEMEN AND VETERINARIANS

FROM: Rick M. Arthur, DVM, Equine Medical Director

The California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) has begun monitoring cobalt levels in horses competing at California racetracks and in certain necropsy specimens. Cobalt toxicity has been associated with myocardial and other organ pathology in humans and other animals. High cobalt levels have been associated with the parenteral or oral administration of cobalt salts. While there is no documented evidence of cobalt toxicity in race horses, the CHRB considers the administration of cobalt salts a potential equine health and safety issue.

Cobalt in excess of 5 parts per billion (ppb) in blood (serum) or 25 ppb in urine will trigger an investigation to determine the source of the cobalt. Until specific criteria are determined, the top 10% cobalt levels from necropsy tissue specimens will trigger an investigation to determine the source of the cobalt.

Water soluble cobalt salts have a number of industrial and agricultural uses, such as an ingredient in the manufacture of feed and mineral supplements. They are not intended for administration to horses. Horsemen are reminded that CHRB rule 1902.5 prohibits the administration of any noxious or harmful substance to a horse.

Cobalt is an essential element present in Vitamin B-12. There is no evidence that Vitamin B-12 injections will produce abnormally high cobalt readings. Nor will normal equine vitamin and mineral supplements. Low concentrations of cobalt salts found in routine feed and vitamin/mineral supplements are legal and not found to be harmful.

Please report any incidents of improper cobalt administration to CHRB investigators.