

STAFF ANALYSIS
DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY THE BOARD REGARDING PROPOSED
AMENDMENTS TO CHRB RULES 1588 AND 1878 (AGE-BASED ELIGIBILITY TO
RACE AND TO CONDUCT OFFICIAL WORKOUTS)

Board Meeting

July 8, 2026

ISSUE

The California Horse Racing Board (Board) proposes to amend Rule 1588 (Horse Ineligible to Start in a Race) and Rule 1878 (Workouts) to establish uniform, statewide maximum ages for racing and workouts and to standardize the age at which maidens are ineligible to start. The amendments codify long-standing racetrack “house rules” into regulation to eliminate confusion, promote equine safety and welfare, and align California with national age conventions (e.g., January 1 “age up”) used by major racing authorities. This item is presented for Board discussion and action.

SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION

The proposed amendments will:

1. Standardize age-based eligibility statewide by replacing track-specific house rules with uniform maximum ages for racing and workouts, and a single maiden age cutoff applicable to all breeds and facilities, including county fairs.
2. Codify the industry’s January 1 “age up” convention (Northern Hemisphere), ensuring consistent age-class competition and alignment with The Jockey Club and the United States Trotting Association.
3. Promote equine safety and welfare by recognizing performance decline and increased injury susceptibility with age and cumulative use, and by creating a clearer path to timely retirement and second careers.

PROBLEM

California statute sets a minimum racing age but no maximum, leaving upper-age eligibility to venue-specific house rules. As a result, a horse may be eligible at one track but ineligible at another, and county fairs have traditionally operated without explicit maximum-age limits. Maiden eligibility also varies by track (e.g., six vs. seven years), and Quarter Horse/Standardbred policies have not been uniformly codified. This patchwork produces confusion and uneven application of age-based eligibility statewide. Further, the absence of uniform maximum ages for workouts undermines welfare-based consistency: a horse too old to race may still appear for official timed workouts, exposing it to similar physical stresses without a statewide standard to prevent it.

NECESSITY

Regulatory amendments are necessary to translate long-standing house rules into a single statewide framework, harmonize eligibility between commercial tracks and county fairs, and align California with national and international practices. Specifically:

- Rule 1588 (Horse Ineligible to Start in a Race)
 - Add subsection (a)(15) to establish maximum racing ages across breeds.

Purpose: Clarifies eligibility, promotes equine safety and welfare, and supports timely transitions to second careers. Harmonizes Standardbred policy with the United States Trotting Association age framework and codifies Thoroughbred/Quarter Horse house rules statewide.

 - Text (a)(15):

“when such horse is fifteen (15) years of age or older if a standardbred or eleven (11) years of age or older if any other breed.”
 - Add subsection (a)(16) to establish a uniform maiden age cutoff:

Purpose: Removes venue variability by adopting a single statewide rule that maidens seven (7) years of age and older are ineligible to start, consistent with house rules at Del Mar and Los Alamitos and supported in public comment over the alternative six-year cutoff.

 - Text (a)(16):

“when such horse is a maiden, as defined by rule 1420(k), and seven (7) years of age or older.”
- Rule 1878 (Workouts)
 - Add new subsection (b)(1) to designate parallel maximum ages for official workouts, ensuring training eligibility cannot outlast racing eligibility and removing track-to-track variability.
 - Text (b)(1):

“The horse is fourteen (14) years of age or younger if a standardbred or ten (10) years of age or younger if any other breed;”
 - Add new subsection (b)(2) to set a maximum age for maiden workouts that mirrors the racing cutoff:
 - Text (b)(2):

“The horse is a maiden, as defined by rule 1420(k), and six (6) years of age or younger;”
 - Renumber prior subsections (existing (b)(1) and (b)(2) on veterinary exam/evaluation) to (b)(3) and (b)(4) respectively to accommodate the new age-based provisions at the top of subsection (b).

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED FROM THE REGULATORY ACTION

Standardizing age limits statewide is expected to:

- Eliminate confusion by replacing track-specific house rules with a uniform statewide standard for racing and workout eligibility (including maiden cutoffs).
- Reduce injuries and catastrophic events among older horses by establishing maximum ages reflecting increased risk with age and cumulative use.
- Improve transparency and fairness for owners, trainers, officials, and the wagering public by making eligibility uniform across tracks and breeds.

- Increase second-career placement potential by focusing retirement earlier in the risk curve, when horses are more adoptable and sound for alternative disciplines.

TECHNICAL, THEORETICAL, AND EMPIRICAL STUDIES, REPORTS, OR SIMILAR DOCUMENTS RELIED UPON

The Board relied in part on the following:

1. Gramm, M., & Marksteiner, R. (2011). *The Effect of Age on Thoroughbred Racing Performance*. *Journal of Equine Science*, 21(4), 73–78. doi:10.1294/jes.21.73
2. Hitchens, P. L., Morrice-West, A. V., Stevenson, M. A., & Whitton, R. C. (2019). *Meta-analysis of risk factors for racehorse catastrophic musculoskeletal injury in flat racing*. *The Veterinary Journal*, 245(1), 29–40. doi:10.1016/j.tvjl.2018.11.014
3. Georgopoulos, S. P., & Parkin, T. D. H. (2017). *Risk factors for equine fractures in Thoroughbred flat racing in North America*. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, 139, 99–104. doi:10.1016/j.prevetmed.2016.12.006
4. Sweeney, D., Wang, Y., Palmer, S. E., Holmström, M., Donohue, K. D., Farnsworth, K. D., Sanz, M. G., Lambert, D. H., & Bayly, W. M. (2026). *Thoroughbreds deemed to be most at risk by inertial measurement unit sensors suffered a fatal musculoskeletal injury at a higher rate than other racehorses*. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 264(1), 81–88. doi:10.2460/javma.25.04.0268
5. The Jockey Club (Aug. 2025). *The American Stud Book: Principal Rules and Requirements*.
6. United States Trotting Association (May 1, 2026). *2026 Charter, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations*.

These documents are available for viewing on the board's website at <https://www.chrb.ca.gov/>.

RESULTS OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT (Gov. Code § 11346.3(b))

The Board's Economic Impact Assessment finds:

- No impact on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.
- No impact on the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state.
- No impact on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state.
- No direct benefits to the health and welfare of California residents, worker safety, or the state's environment.

Because the age cutoffs largely codify existing house rules already in effect at California racetracks, the statewide standard is not expected to have a significant, statewide adverse economic impact on businesses or their ability to compete.

CREATION OR ELIMINATION OF JOBS WITHIN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Defining maximum ages for racing and workouts will not result in the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

CREATION OF NEW BUSINESSES OR THE ELIMINATION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES WITHIN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Defining maximum ages for racing and workouts will not result in the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state.

EXPANSION OF BUSINESSES CURRENTLY DOING BUSINESS WITHIN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Defining maximum ages for racing and workouts will not result in the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state.

BENEFITS OF THE REGULATION TO THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS, WORKER SAFETY, AND THE STATE'S ENVIRONMENT

Defining maximum ages for racing and workouts will not result in benefits to the health and welfare of California residents, worker safety, or the state's environment.

CONTROLLING LAW

- Business & Professions Code § 19440 (in part):
The Board shall adopt rules and regulations that protect and advance the health, safety, welfare, and aftercare of racehorses.
- Business & Professions Code § 19668:
Establishes a minimum racing age (two years after foaling) for parimutuel racing.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the proposed amendments to Rule 1588 and Rule 1878 as drafted below (Attachment A), and direct staff to proceed with rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act. The amendments harmonize statewide eligibility, promote equine safety and welfare, and align California with national age conventions and association policies.

Attachment A – Proposed Regulatory Text

CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS
TITLE 4. BUSINESS REGULATIONS
DIVISION 4. CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD
ARTICLE 6. ENTRIES AND DECLARATIONS
RULE 1588. HORSE INELIGIBLE TO START IN A RACE

Legend:

Added text is indicated with an underline.

Deleted text is indicated by ~~strikeout~~.

Omitted text is indicated by (* * *)

Modified text (First 15-day) comment period: Added text is indicated with a double underline. Deleted text is indicated by double ~~strikeout~~.

Modified text (Second 15-day) comment period: Added text is indicated in *italics* with a double underline. Deleted text is indicated in *italics* with double ~~strikeout~~.

§ 1588. Horse Ineligible to Start in a Race.

- (a) In addition to any other valid ground or reason, a horse is ineligible to start in any race:

* * *

- (15) when such horse is fifteen (15) years of age or older if a standardbred or eleven (11) years of age or older if any other breed.
- (16) when such horse is a maiden, as defined by rule 1420(k), and ~~six (6)~~ seven (7) years of age or older.

NOTE:

Authority cited: Sections 19440 and 19562, Business and Professions Code.

Reference: Sections 19440 and 19562, Business and Professions Code

CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD
TITLE 4. CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS
DIVISION 4. CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD
ARTICLE 16. GENERAL CONDUCT
PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF RULE 1878,
WORKOUTS

§ 1878. Workouts.

* * *

- (b) A horse shall not be permitted to workout unless:
(1) The horse is fourteen (14) years of age or younger if a standardbred or ten (10) years of age or younger if any other breed, or
(2) The horse is a maiden as defined by rule 1420 (k), and seven (7) years of age or younger; and

(43) The horse has been examined by the trainer's attending veterinarian during the seventy-two (72) hours immediately preceding the workout for the express purpose of evaluating the horse's fitness to workout; and

(24) An evaluation has been conducted by the attending veterinarian and a determination has been made that the horse is fit to workout.

(A) The examination shall include, but not be limited to, close inspection of the eyes, examination of the legs, and observation of the horse at rest and while in motion.

(B) The attending veterinarian and trainer shall inform the Official Veterinarian of any changes in the horse's fitness after examination and before workout.

(C) The evaluation shall be recorded in the Veterinarian Report in accordance with section 1842.

~~(3) such horse is fourteen (14) years of age or younger if a standardbred or ten (10) years or younger if any other breed.~~

~~(4) such horse is a maiden as defined by rule 1420 (k), and five six (6) years of age or younger.~~

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NOTE:

Authority cited: Sections 19440 and 19562, Business and Professions Code.

Reference: Sections 19440 and 19562, Business and Professions Code.