

AAEP News Release, February 16, 2009

AAEP Releases Veterinary Recommendations for Protecting the Safety and Welfare of Racehorses

The American Association of Equine Practitioners today issued guidelines for protecting the health of the Thoroughbred racehorse. The white paper, "Putting the Horse First: Veterinary Recommendations for the Safety and Welfare of the Thoroughbred Racehorse," provides veterinary guidance on many issues challenging the racing industry and the care of the racehorse.

Recommendations within the white paper are focused in four key areas: the racing business model, the veterinarian-owner-trainer relationship, medication, and the public perception of racing. Additionally, changes to the structure of claiming races and medication usage in horses intended for sale at public auction are addressed.

"As an organization with the primary mission of protecting the health and welfare of the horse, the safety of the racehorse is one of our highest priorities," said AAEP President Dr. Harry Werner. "This is a critical time for the racing industry, and we join the efforts of other groups who are determined to make improvements for the health of our equine athletes."

Key points in the white paper include:

- Continued identification and implementation of procedures and strategies that will significantly reduce the injury rate of horses.
- Standardization and enhancement of pre-race and post-race veterinary examinations with mandatory cross-jurisdictional sharing of information.
- Universal adoption in all racing jurisdictions of the Association of Racing Commissioners International model medication rules which state that no medication should be administered on race day except for furosemide (Salix®).
- Increased racetrack security to ensure compliance by all racing participants with medication rules.
- Provide complete transparency for the veterinarian-trainer-owner relationship in all aspects of health care decisions.
- Development in all racing jurisdictions of a program for the rehabilitation, retraining and adoption of horses whose racing careers have ended.

The white paper was developed by the AAEP's Racing Task Force, a group comprised of private racetrack practitioners, regulatory veterinarians and veterinary specialists. Dr. Scott Palmer of Clarksburg, N.J., and Dr. Foster Northrop of Louisville, Ky., served as chair and vice chair, respectively. This group is now a standing committee of the AAEP.

"Our premise is very simple: What is good for the horse is good for racing," explained Dr. Palmer. "In a unique climate of widespread industry commitment to fix what is wrong with racing, veterinarians have made every effort to put the horse first in that

process. It is fair to say that particular recommendations will resonate with some individuals and alienate others within the industry. Nonetheless, we'd like to think that if our horses could read this document, they would be pleased."

The AAEP intends its white paper to provide guidance and support to those who are working to bring meaningful change.

"On behalf of the AAEP, I express gratitude to Drs. Palmer and Northrop and the other dedicated veterinarians who have worked since last summer to develop substantive recommendations," added Dr. Werner. "The AAEP looks forward to continued cooperation with all industry stakeholders to ensure the health and welfare of the racehorse."

The white paper is available [here](#). For more information, contact Sally Baker, AAEP director of marketing and public relations, at (859) 233-0147 or sbaker@aaep.org.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners, headquartered in Lexington, Ky., was founded in 1954 as a non-profit organization dedicated to the health and welfare of the horse. Currently, the AAEP reaches more than 5 million horse owners through its nearly 10,000 members worldwide and is actively involved in ethics issues, practice management, research and continuing education in the equine veterinary profession and horse industry.