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## Kentucky Has New Equine Drug-Testing Contract

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The company that conducts equine drug testing in Great Britain but which has not been involved in testing of horses in America has been awarded the contract to handle the testing of horses racing in Kentucky, effective January 2011.

The Kentucky Horse Racing Commission unanimously approved the contract with HFL Sport Sciences on March 16 following the recommendation of the commission's Equine Drug Research Council. The drug research council also unanimously approved the selection of HFL after lengthy discussion during a meeting that preceded the KHRC meeting.

Dr. Jerry Yon, who chairs the Equine Drug Research Council, said "it was felt that the HFL laboratory offered a world-class laboratory with tremendous interest in research."

Yon said selection of HFL will save the Kentucky horse industry about 20% over the present cost of drug-testing and that there are provisions in the contract that offer additional benefits to the Bluegrass racing industry and the KHRC. He noted that if the British company enters into an equine drug-testing contract with another racing jurisdiction, 5% of the profits from any such contracts would be sent to Kentucky for equine drug research.

Although HFL has no existing operations in the U.S., Yon said it is involved in some non-equine testing, with those samples being shipped to England for testing. He said the company plans to expand into other areas of drug testing in the U.S., part of the incentive for them to want the Kentucky contract.

Commission chairman Robert Beck said the selection of a company to conduct Kentucky's equine drug testing at a lab in the state follows a recommendation from the Governor's Task Force on the Future of Horse Racing that recommended that the state racing industry needed a "world-class research and drug testing institute" with significant accreditation status. He said the contract with the British testing entity would accomplish that goal.

Beck said the selection of HFL was the result of an estimated 1,000 hours of work by racing commission staff, members of the equine drug research council, and other commissioners and that he was confident they had done their "due diligence" in selecting the drug-testing firm.

The other proposal considered for Kentucky drug-testing was submitted by the Equine Drug Testing and Research Laboratory, which is affiliated with the United States Equestrian Federation. Established by the USEF's Equine Drugs and Medications Program, EDTRL is based in Ithaca, NY., and is planning to relocate to Lexington.

John Long, CEO of the USEF, said that while his organization would like to have had the Kentucky work, the KHRC decision will not alter plans to move to the Bluegrass state. He noted that relocating the lab is part of an on-going process by USEF to centralize its operations near its headquarters at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Commission Ned Bonnie, who assisted the KHRC staff in reviewing the proposed contracts, said he was approving the HFL contract with some trepidation.

Bonnie questioned the company's lack of experience in equine drug testing in Kentucky and whether the company could establish a lab and hire a qualified staff in Kentucky in time to begin drug testing by January 2011. Bonnie also questioned whether the company would be able to become accredited in the U.S. He also said he has some concerns about the techniques used by HFL to conduct its drug test screening, the first step in the testing process and which is used to determine which drug samples are suspect and need additional testing.

Information presented during the equine drug research council said HFL uses testing equipment called Orbitrap that can detect the presence of 1,300 substances in each sample.

Yon responded that "this company knows how to run a lab," explaining that it conducted more than 28,000 equine drug samples in Great Britain in 2008 and handles the testing for 25 other racing regulatory bodies.

Lisa Underwood, executive director of the KHRC who spent a lot of time analyzing the drug-testing contracts, said the HFL contract is a good deal for the state and its horse industry.

"HFL has an extensive background in equine drug testing and research, and Kentucky stands to benefit from the addition of a great deal of knowledge into the therapeutic uses of medications in race horses," Underwood said in a statement. "I am very pleased we have reached this agreement and I am very excited about the job and economic growth that will result."

HFL previously received approval for up to \$425,000 in state economic development funds to build a facility that could have as many as 48 employs within a decade. Long said the USEF has also applied for a similar state incentive and is awaiting word on whether it will be obtained.

HFL is a division of Quotient Bioresearch, which calls itself a leading provider of early-stage and specialist drug development services to pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device clients worldwide. Quotient said it employs more than 600 people in its sports business and its drug-development services business.

In addition to approving the contract with HFL, the commission approved extension of the current drug testing contract with the University of Florida through January 2011, at which time the British company plans to have its Lexington-based lab operational.

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