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## Kentucky expects timely TCO2 testing

by [Frank Angst](#)

While Kentucky will not change any rules when it switches equine drug testing facilities next month, trainers pushing the envelope may want to back off.

That was the advice of Mary Scollay, D.V.M., equine medical director for the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission, at a Tuesday morning meeting with about 30 horsemen on the Turfway Park backstretch. The commission expects tests, especially those for total carbon dioxide, to be conducted in a timelier manner when it changes to the Florida Racing Laboratory at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Florida for its equine drug tests on March 4.

Rick Sams, Ph.D., director of the racing lab, conducted Tuesday's presentation and plans similar meetings with horsemen during the upcoming meets at Keeneland Race Course and Churchill Downs. Sams said TCO2 tests will be conducted on the day samples are received at the Gainesville, Florida facility. He outlined a schedule in which the lab will receive samples for testing generally one day after racing, or on Monday if collected on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.

Sams said testing soon after samples are collected ensures the most reliable results. He said screening tests should be complete three days after receipt. The lab performs further confirmation tests on questionable samples.

Scollay noted that some trainers may have discovered they are able to administer some therapeutic substances closer to race day than the guidelines advise. She said the new lab may pick up such practices.

"The best way to avoid a violation is to follow the guidelines," Scollay said.

Sams offered some general advice on recent trends he has seen. He advised trainers that orally administered acepromazine is lingering in horses, including up to three months in one horse studied. He advised trainers who were concerned about this problem to request a clearance test before racing a Thoroughbred that had received regular oral doses of acepromazine.

The owner or trainer picks up the cost of such clearance tests, but Sams said because the clearance test involves a specific drug, it is not as expensive as the commission's comprehensive tests. He said injected acepromazine generally clears a horse's system in five days.

Sams also emphasized that trainers should not administer the anti-inflammatory dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) within 48 hours of race day.

"If you're pushing the envelope, now would be a good time to change practices," Sams said.

Trainer Mike Cook said the meeting was informative and helpful in addressing his concerns.

Noting that the Florida testing lab is one of four United States labs accredited by the International Organization for Standardization, Marty Maline, executive director of the Kentucky Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, asked if split-sample results from non-accredited labs would not be recognized by the commission. Scollay advised that horsemen inform the commission what lab they plan to use ahead of time to allow that lab to confirm that they are capable of conducting the needed test.

Sams added that a split sample from another lab has never contradicted the Florida lab's results.

*Frank Angst is senior writer for THOROUGHBRED TIMES*

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