

New whips to be tested at Keeneland

by [Frank Angst](#)

As Kentucky Thoroughbred racing moves toward adopting new whip rules, jockeys in the state will have the opportunity to try some of the proposed whips during the Keeneland Race Course fall meeting.

Rogers Beasley, Keeneland's director of racing, said the Lexington track would purchase 30 or 40 of the whips that meet expected new standards. Every rider in two races each day will use the whips.

Beasley presented the plan at a meeting of the Safety and Welfare Committee of the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission on Monday in Lexington. The committee decided to not make a recommendation on whip regulations to the KHRC at its September 22 meeting as it waits for some final details in shaping regulation.

Committee members chose to wait for feedback from riders at Keeneland and see what recommendations are made by the Association of Racing Commissioners International. In August, the RCI board voted in favor of new regulations for whips and formed a subcommittee to fine tune proposed language in a model rule. That model rule could be adopted in October. Also, the National Thoroughbred Racing Association plans to survey fans on whip use.

While every detail has not been finalized, the Safety and Welfare Committee appears committed to requiring more padding on whips, a longer popper, shortened length of whips, and decreased weight of whips.

"This will be a lot more benign on the horses," retired jockey Chris McCarron said of the new whips.

Beasley said the new whips would be used in races early on the card and will not be used in stakes races. He said the track will collect information from riders and Keeneland will turn that information over to the Safety and Welfare Committee.

Jockeys' Guild National Manager Terry Meyocks said riders are comfortable with the changes.

"I think we're about there," Meyocks said.

The Safety and Welfare Committee also discussed several other horse and rider safety issues, including safety reins, regulation of shock-wave therapy, helmet and vest regulations, and expanding the equine injury reporting database.

Safety and Welfare Committee members asked staff members to compile more information on safety reins and how other states are implementing policy on their use. Chairman Elizabeth Lavin said Kentucky should move forward on safety reins, which feature a reinforcing material in case the leather rein snaps. That backup would allow the rider to control the horse.

"This is the most no-brainer issue we've had come before us," Lavin said.

Safety and Welfare Committee member Ned Bonnie did not want to take action without additional information.

"I'm not against safety but I don't want to jump the gun," Bonnie said.

Kentucky Equine Medical Director Mary Scollay, D.V.M., outlined plans to expand equine injury reporting in Kentucky. Currently, state veterinarians report injuries to a national database that includes 64 participating tracks. The expansion would require licensed equine veterinarians to report injuries as well.

Before crafting such a regulation, the committee recommended first meeting with veterinarians and trainers in the state to explain to them how the system works.

"This needs to be from the ground up," Lavin said. "It ain't going to work if we try to shove it down their throats."

Scollay emphasized that although the system uses the names of horses, the information is confidential.

Safety and Welfare Committee member Foster Northrup, D.V.M., called on the committee to not allow horses that receive shock-wave therapy to race within ten days of treatment. Northrup said too often the treatment is used to block pain. The committee called on KHRC staff to examine rules in other states and come up with ideas on how

such rules could be enforced.

Frank Angst is senior writer for Thoroughbred Times

© Copyright 2008, Thoroughbred Times. This information may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without written permission of the copyright owner, Thoroughbred Times Company, Inc.

[Privacy Policy](#)