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## Del Mar 'House Rule' to Require Softer Whips

by Blood-Horse Staff

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Jockeys at Del Mar will be using softer equine friendly riding crops in all races under a "house rule" that will take effect at the track on Aug. 12, the Jockeys' Guild announced.

The new crops, which have been in use by several jockeys during the Del Mar meet, conform to the standards of the Association of Racing Commissioners International Model Rules, according to a statement issued by the Guild.

"Both the jockeys and Del Mar are pleased to achieve this milestone," said Darrell Haire, regional manager for the Jockeys' Guild, following a meeting between track management and the riders.

Haire credited Joe Harper, Del Mar Thoroughbred Club president and general manager, and Craig Fravel, the track's executive vice president, as well as California Horse Racing Board member Bo Derek for helping "to attain this goal which will be beneficial to the welfare of the horses competing at the meet."

"The jockeys deserve all the credit," Derek said. "They were out front on this issue, and I am pleased that they worked with Del Mar management to take this step to benefit horses racing at Del Mar."

Del Mar has purchased 40 whips from four different suppliers so that an adequate supply will be available. The whips are made of softer leather than standard equipment and emit a popping sound when used.

"This is a great step for racing," said jockey Garrett Gomez. "All the jocks discussed it and wanted to make this move. One of our biggest problems was getting enough riding crops for everybody. With Del Mar's help, we were able to get a big enough supply, including for riders who couldn't necessarily afford them. With the new riding crop, horses seem to react to the sound of the popper rather than from a physical reaction to the whip. It's good for racing and we wanted to be at the forefront."

"I'm really happy we have made this change," said jockey Mike Smith. "I've used one for quite a while. They are very equine friendly. With the old crop, if you knew how to use it, it was fine. Sometimes though in the heat of battle you might make a mistake. With these new riding crops, it really eliminates that possibility. They make noise, but they are all cushion and don't cause any harm to the horse."

"The quality of the new riding crops has improved dramatically," said Haire. "The padded flaps are now durable. While most of the riders have experimented with the new riding crop at various racetracks, including in California, this will allow others with less experience with the new riding crops to utilize crops produced by a variety of suppliers."

"Del Mar management has been exemplary in their cooperation and communication with the jockeys" said Terry Meyocks, national manager of the Jockeys' Guild.

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