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Second Welfare and Safety Summit Planned

By Amanda Duckworth

Participants from the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit announced a second summit is scheduled for March 17-18, 2008, at Keeneland. In addition, members on Sept. 20 provided updates on a variety of summit-inspired initiatives.

“In the 11 months since the original summit, each working group has made considerable progress toward promoting the health and soundness of the racehorse, in concert with efforts that also promote the health of the industry, in their particular area of focus,” Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation president Ed Bowen said. “We are indebted to these individuals for their ongoing commitment and we look forward to gathering a cross-section of industry representatives together once again next March to plan our next steps.”

An on-track injury reporting system developed by Dr. Mary Scollay has successfully been launched and has received 924 injury updates from 20 racetracks reflecting pre-race exam scratches, gate scratches, and horses that were determined to be lame or injured during or immediately after a race or in the detention barn after the race.

Other projects in the works include a national test for first-time trainers and trainer power ratings. The test would contain three parts: a written exam, a barn test, and an interview by stewards.

Topics being investigated include research proposals for monitoring track surfaces, introducing auction races, and possibly changing claiming rules. Auction races are races in which the winner and other participants may be auctioned in the saddling paddock 15 minutes after a race is declared official. There also has been discussion about making claims null and void if a horse breaks down or is vanned off after a race.

Earlier this month, the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and The Jockey Club, which held the original summit, released a stallion durability index. The index came about as a result of a committee that was created to obtain and supply related information to breeders.