

## Equine Injury Reporting System Receives More Support

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Dr. Mary Scollay

Photo: Jim Lisa Photos/Don Brown

The day after representatives of the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit announced an injury reporting pilot project was set to begin June 1 at 30 racetracks, three more tracks have indicated interest in the program. The uniform, on-track equine injury system was developed by Dr. Mary Scollay.

"I have gotten a call from Woodbine, and they will be participating," Scollay said. "I have also heard from Pimlico and Laurel. The Maryland Jockey Club contacted me and indicated that they will be participating.

"I am confident that California will be on board, but they already have a system in place. They need to find a way to make this system compatible with what they are doing so they aren't diverting too much energy into this and taking away veterinarians' time from other tasks that may require more immediate attention."

The goal of the injury reporting pilot project is threefold: to identify the frequency, type, and outcome of racing injuries using a standardized format that will generate valid composite statistics; to develop a centralized epidemiologic database that could be used to identify markers for horses at increased risk of injury; and to serve as a data source for research directed at improving safety and preventing injuries.

"In pre-race inspections, I probably spend less than 45 seconds with my hand on any given horse," Scollay said. "You can learn a lot in that time, but certainly you can't learn enough. If we can find ways to identify horses that are at an increased risk of specific injuries, we may be better able to target our pre-race inspections in a way that makes them more effective."

The centerpiece of the system is a standardized form that will be used by racetrack veterinarians to identify what happened to an injured horse. The injured horses will not be identified at any time, and tracks will be able to compare their individual statistics to the aggregate statistics. Many tracks have been keeping records of similar information on their own, but this will provide a standardized way of documenting injuries.

"Each track has a confidential code number specific to that racetrack and known only to that racetrack and to me," Scollay said. "There is no possibility of targeting specific horses, trainers, or racetracks. This is not about recrimination."

Scollay hopes to have a similar system in place within the next year for training injuries.

"There is an initial effort this year to start tracking training injuries," she said. "It is a considerably more complex issue. We are working on it, but we are not ready for it."

Hopefully, sometime next year we'll have specific ways to start tracking training injuries."

Another benefit is that the data could be linked to other studies emanating from the summit.

One is an ongoing study headed by Dr. Mick Peterson, professor of mechanical engineering, University of Maine, that records racing surface data.

"There is no such thing as 'an acceptable rate of injury,' but until we are able to document injury rates, trends, and outcomes—and figure out where we are—it is hard to figure out how to get to where we want to be," Scollay said.

In addition to the tracks starting the study June 1, several other tracks anticipate participating if they can arrange personnel by that time.

The Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit, which was conceived by the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation board of directors in 2005 and held in October 2006, addressed this issue and many others concerning the safety and soundness of the Thoroughbred racehorse.

Six committees are conducting research and making recommendations on the action plans that evolved from the summit's strategic planning session:

- **Injury Reporting:** Dr. Mary Scollay
- **Stallions' Progeny Racing Durability:** Ed Bowen
- **Racing Surfaces:** Dr. Wayne McIlwraith
- **Race Condition and Race Office:** Eual Wyatt
- **Shoeing and Hoofcare:** Bill Casner
- **Education and Licensing:** Paul Bowlinger

At the Association of Racing Commissioners International convention in April, Dan Fick, executive vice president and executive director of The Jockey Club; Bill Casner, chairman and co-owner of WinStar Farm; and Peterson and Scollay presented updates on the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit and the focus and progress of their respective committees.

One of the model rules passed by the RCI included a ban on toe grabs longer than 4 millimeters.

"The front leg of a horse supports about 65% of the horse's weight," Bill Casner said. "As the height of the toe grabs increases, the chances of having an injury also increase."

"The injury reporting system and toe grab ban are just two examples of progress from the summit," Fick said. "Committee members are working hard to improve the safety and soundness of racehorses, and we will continue to provide updates from each of them in the months ahead."

The Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit was coordinated and underwritten by the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and The Jockey Club, and was

hosted by the Keeneland Association Oct. 16-17, 2006. Since 1983, the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation has underwritten 230 projects at 32 universities for more than \$14 million.

Here are the racetracks participating in the on-track injury reporting system as of May 29:

Albuquerque Downs  
Aqueduct  
Arlington Park  
Belmont Park  
Beulah Park  
Calder Race Course  
Canterbury Park  
Charles Town Races  
Churchill Downs  
Delaware Park  
Ellis Park  
Emerald Downs  
Fonner Park  
Gulfstream Park  
Hastings Park  
Hawthorne Racecourse  
Hollywood Park  
Hoosier Park  
Indiana Downs  
Keeneland  
Lone Star Park  
Meadowlands  
Monmouth Park  
Penn National  
Philadelphia Park  
Prairie Meadows  
Saratoga  
Suffolk Downs  
Turfway Park  
Yavapai Downs