

Pennsylvania testing reduces positives

Testing for anabolic steroids in horses racing in Pennsylvania sharply decreased the number of positive findings since the commonwealth instituted its phased ban on the medications, the principal investigator for the Pennsylvania Horse Racing Commission's Research Program said on July 19.

Speaking at the National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association's summer meeting, Lawrence R. Soma, V.M.D., said the incidents of positive findings are approaching zero as the initial penalty phase of the ban takes effect.

"In Pennsylvania, the playing field is level now," said Soma, who is the Marilyn M. Simpson professor of large animal veterinary medicine at the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center.

Pennsylvania initiated its steroid ban in April, and it will take full effect in October. According to the guidelines, any steroid finding below 200 picograms per milliliter of blood is regarded as a negative finding. A picogram is one-trillionth of a gram.

The commonwealth's work on steroid detection began in 2004, and a sampling of 900 horses racing in the state the following year found approximately 60% were positive for steroids, which was an indication of how widespread their use was in racing.

Horsemen in Pennsylvania and surrounding states were informed in December that quantitative testing would begin in March; 29 Thoroughbreds tested above the 200-picogram level that month. The total declined to 22 in April and then rose to 36 in May. The total declined to 20 in June and fell to three in the first ten days of July.—*Don Clippinger*

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Weekly Survey

From the **TIMES** website

Do you think Curlin's performance in the Man o' War Stakes (G1) indicates he is ready for a start in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (Fr-G1) in October?

Yes—27.34% No—72.66%