

Wednesday, February 21, 2007

Contact: Dan Fick (859) 224-2708

**Welfare and Safety Summit Committee Supports
Enforcement of California Rule on Toe Grabs**

A special committee on shoeing and hoof care that was formed coming out of the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit is calling for a ban of toe grabs with a height greater than 4 millimeters on the front horseshoes of Thoroughbred racehorses.

The committee is chaired by Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association President Bill Casner. Members of the committee include trainers Richard Mandella and Todd Pletcher; farriers Steve Norman and Mitch Taylor; veterinarians Sue Stover, Rob Gillette and Bob Hunt; mechanical engineer and track surface researcher Dr. Mick Peterson; California racing commissioner John Harris; and Hall of Fame jockey Chris McCarron.

The committee began meeting in January to follow through on the Welfare and Safety Summit recommendation to ban certain horseshoes that research has shown to be detrimental to the soundness and safety of racehorses. In recommending a ban of toe grabs greater than 4 millimeters, the committee is focused on the use of "regular" and "high" (or Quarter Horse) toe grabs, which have a 6.4- and 9.5-millimeter toe grab, respectively. Research by Dr. Sue Stover of the University of California at Davis has demonstrated that high toe grabs on front shoes make a Thoroughbred 16 times more likely to suffer a catastrophic injury while racing.

The California Horse Racing Board passed Rule 1690.1 "Toe Grabs Prohibited" in February 2006 and will discuss enforcement at its meeting tomorrow. John Harris, vice chair of the California Horse Racing Board, commented, "We have solid research on this issue and now it's time to do something about it. I think that will happen this week at our February 22 CHR Board meeting. That should pay some good dividends for horse welfare. I urge the rest of the country to follow our lead."

The California rule will be proposed for adoption nationwide at the Association of Racing Commissioners International Model Rules Committee meeting in April. The rule states, "Toe grabs with a height greater than 4 millimeters worn on the front shoes of Thoroughbred horses while racing are prohibited."

The committee on shoeing and hoof care is also calling for tracks to ban the use of all toe grabs on front horseshoes on synthetic track surfaces such as Polytrack, Cushion Track and Tapeta. The use of toe grabs, turndowns, caulks and toe grabs on hind horseshoes is also under consideration by the committee pending the review of existing research. A request for proposals for further research may be forthcoming.

Committee members are also working on educational materials on shoeing and hoof care, including the use of high-speed cameras and track surface measuring devices developed by Dr. Peterson. Graphic displays of the effects of toe grabs on the front legs of racehorses are also in development. The committee's future agenda includes the potential to develop and offer a model rule requiring certification for farriers licensed to shoe racehorses and extending the toe grab restrictions to American Quarter Horse racing.

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 on October 16-17, 2006. The work of the special committee on shoeing and hoof care is being assisted by Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation President Ed Bowen, The Jockey Club Executive Director and Executive Vice President Dan Fick and University of Kentucky Equine Studies doctoral candidate Kimberly Brown. Since 1983, the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation has underwritten 230 projects at 32 universities for more than \$14 million.

For more information, contact Dan Fick at (859) 224-2708.