



State of California

BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES AND HOUSING AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor
Alexis Podesta, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Horse Racing Board, Stronach Group Agree to Enhanced Safety Review of Horses at Santa Anita Park

SACRAMENTO – Effective immediately, in response to Governor Gavin Newsom’s direction, the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB), working closely with The Stronach Group (TSG), owner of Santa Anita Park, will implement enhanced safety measures and reviews to further protect horses at Santa Anita.

Led by CHRB Equine Medical Director Dr. Rick Arthur, DVM, and Chief Steward Darrel McHargue, a five-member team will provide additional review of horses’ medical, training and racing history. This team consists of independent CHRB veterinarians and stewards, empowered to scratch horses that do not appear fit to run.

Specifically, the horse safety review team will utilize a new, comprehensive evaluation rubric to determine if each individual horse is at elevated risk of injury before racing. These criteria will include any history on the Veterinarian’s List and Steward’s List as well as any medical history, race history, and physical observations of the horse.

Importantly, under the new protocols, every member of the review team must agree that the horse is not at elevated risk of injury in order to clear a horse to race. One dissenting member of the review team can prevent a horse from racing. TSG management has agreed to then instruct the Racing Secretary, who is currently responsible for deciding if a horse is fit to race, to deny the entry of any such horse and treat the review team’s recommendation as the final word.

“This is unprecedented in American horse racing,” said Alexis Podesta, Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, which oversees CHRB. “Never have we had this additional layer of review with a team of experts to connect data points and confer on the well-being and capability of individual race horses. Furthermore, recommendations coming from this team will be the final word as to whether or not a horse races. I expect the industry as a whole will embrace this effort.”

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“These are historic safety enhancements,” said CHRB Executive Director Rick Baedeker. “We are taking these additional steps to further mitigate the risk to horses at Santa Anita. The California Horse Racing Board is committed to doing all we can to ensure the safety of the horses there.”

“Horse and rider safety is our top priority at Santa Anita Park, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to making California horse racing the safest and best in the world,” said TSG President and Chairwoman Belinda Stronach. “We look forward to working with Governor Newsom and the California Horse Racing Board as they implement this additional layer of review through the end of our current meet.”

The review team will be in place for the final six racing days at Santa Anita.

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