

**PENNSYLVANIA HARNESS RACING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING**

**January 21, 2016**

A meeting of the Pennsylvania State Harness Racing Commission was held at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey, PA, Thursday, January 21, 2016 at 11:00 A.M. In attendance representing the Commission were Jonathan Newman, Chairman, and George Crawford, Executive Secretary and Jorge Augusto, Legal Counsel. Representing the PA Department of Agriculture as an Ex-Officio Member of the Commission was Fred Strathmeyer, Deputy Secretary

Chairman Newman called the meeting to order.

Jorge Augusto, Legal Counsel, noted that an executive session took place by phone yesterday where personnel issues were discussed no agency business was transacted.

George Crawford, Executive Secretary, noted that the meeting has been advertised in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Newman asked for approval of the minutes from December 17, 2015. A motion was made by Deputy Strathmeyer and Chairman Newman, and was unanimously approved.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**(Statistical Reports – Prior month and Year-to-Date)**

**The Meadows Racing**

Kevin Decker, Director of Racing Operations, reviewed the previous month's statistics and year to date totals. Racing has been great at the Meadows so far, with Poconos and Harrah's closed for the winter everyone has been coming to The Meadows. The Meadows has been working closely with the MSOA on the Night of Champions. 2016 is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Adios. The Fair Finals will be held again at The Meadows in October this year.

Mr. Decker also congratulated Michele Ruddy on her retirement from Racetrack Manager at Poconos and all the great work she did.

**Meadows Standardbred Owners Association**

Kim Hankins, Executive Director, noted that Ron Battoni retired this year from the PHHA and thanked him for working with the MSOA and welcomed Peter Marinari as the new Executive Director for the PHHA.

The MSOA are looking forward to the 2016 racing season at The Meadows as there is a lot going on this year. The Night of Champions will be a great night of recognition and racing with the horses voted on by the MSOA membership.

Mr. Hankins also congratulated Michele Ruddy on all her hard work with the commission over the years.

### **Harrah's Philadelphia Casino & Racetrack**

Barry Brown, Director of Racing Operations, reviewed the previous month's statistics and year to date totals. 2016 is the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary racing season for Harrah's Philadelphia and looking forward to great racing this year which will start on Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup>. The backside improvement plan was discussed with the PHHA and is progressing along nicely. There will be a survey done with the results projected for the middle of February.

The PHHA and Harrah's have agreed to extend the horsemen's agreement another 30 days.

### **Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs**

Dale Rapson, Director of Racing, reviewed the previous month's statistics and year to date totals. Mr. Rapson congratulated Michele Ruddy on her retirement and thanked her for all the hard work she has done over the year.

Handle was up this year because of Monarch being back in play which is great.

Mr. Rapson also thanked Ron Battoni for their great working relationship they have had over the years.

### **Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association**

Sam Beegle, President, noted that he also enjoyed working with Michele Ruddy and wished her well. A one year racing agreement has been signed at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs with the PHHA and look forward to a great racing season. The meeting with Harrah's went very well also and looks forward to an agreement with them also.

The PHHA announced that the John Simpson Memorial Stakes are being brought back to Pennsylvania this year and will be run at Harrah's Philadelphia.

Mr. Beegle welcomed Peter Marinari as the new Executive Director of the PHHA.

Chairman Newman requested and received comments surrounding discussion on the medication Clenbuterol from those in attendance.

## Research

Dr. Mary Robinson, Acting Director of the Pennsylvania Equine Toxicology and Research Lab and of the University of Pennsylvania, submitted the following report: The laboratory continues to develop new screening methods for various classes of new drugs.

Clenbuterol is a drug used to treat respiratory disease in horses: it is a bronchodilator (i.e. increases airway size) and an expectorant (i.e. promotes expulsion of debris and mucous from the airways). However, clenbuterol also binds to receptors in skeletal muscle to decrease the production of fat and increase the production of muscle – this effect is called repartitioning and has been well described in many species including the horse. Repartitioning was originally demonstrated in horses treated with 2.4 µg/kg twice daily by mouth for two weeks (5 days on/2 days off; Kearns et. al J Appl Physiol 2001;91:2064). A more recent placebo-controlled study by Dr. Rose Nolen-Walston and Dr. Lawrence Soma at New Bolton Center (Nolen-Walston et. al AJVR 2015;76(5):460) has now demonstrated that repartitioning also occurs at a lower dose, 0.8 µg/kg twice daily by mouth, which is the dose commonly administered to race horses. The effect was evident by the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of dosing, and was reversed when treatment was discontinued. These new data indicate revision of the current clenbuterol threshold is required (125 picograms/mL in plasma; estimated 48 hour withdrawal time) to ensure the repartitioning effect of clenbuterol is not compromising the integrity of racing. Two potential policies were briefly discussed.

Policy A. Clenbuterol must not be detected in the plasma AND/OR Clenbuterol must not be above a threshold of 140 picograms/mL in a urine sample.

This policy would require an estimated withdrawal time of two weeks for a horse administered clenbuterol at 0.8 µg/kg twice daily by mouth.

- a. Pro: Because the effects of clenbuterol on muscle were no longer statistically significant by the 11<sup>th</sup> day after discontinuing the 21 day treatment regimen in the Nolen-Walston/Soma study, this threshold would ensure that repartitioning effects would not be present at the time of the race in a horse that has received clenbuterol at 0.8 µg/kg twice daily by mouth.
- b. Con: Since the Standardbred horse races every 7 to 10 days, administration of clenbuterol between races would not be permitted. While there is no documented medical benefit of giving clenbuterol for a short period of time following the race, there is a perceived benefit by those currently administering clenbuterol for 2 to 5 days after the race to some of their horses to help remove blood, mucous, and debris from the lungs.

Policy B. If the Standardbred horse has not raced within 10 days, clenbuterol must not be detected in the plasma AND/OR Clenbuterol must not be above a threshold of 140 picograms/mL in a urine sample. If the Standardbred horse has raced within 10 days, has received clenbuterol under the direction of a veterinarian, and was tested for clenbuterol in the most recent race by a comparable drug testing program, the trainer can request the Commission to consider an alternate threshold of 800 picograms/mL in urine, provided the trainer follows the Commissions reporting requirements.

For a dose of 0.8 µg/kg twice daily by mouth, this policy would require an estimated withdrawal time of two weeks unless the use of an alternate threshold has been requested and approved – if the alternate threshold is approved, an estimated withdrawal time of five days would be required.

- a. Pro: While not proven, a medical benefit due to short term administration of clenbuterol following the race is plausible, and this policy would enable short term administration at 0.8 µg/kg twice daily by mouth, while preventing repartitioning effects following short term and long term administration of clenbuterol.
- b. Con: Increased paperwork and testing to ensure the policy is being followed will increase Commission and PETRL costs depending on the number of trainers electing to use the alternate threshold. If there is no medical need, then the Commission and PETRL are incurring extra costs unnecessarily, and horses are being given a drug they don't need.

#### Additional Information

Alternative therapies exist that do not have repartitioning effects (e.g. albuterol, guaifenesin). These therapies are more expensive, need to be given more frequently, can be difficult to obtain, and veterinarians are not as familiar with them due to the ease of use and current availability of clenbuterol.

#### Conclusion

Both policies have been designed to ensure the welfare of the horse and the integrity of racing. The Commission will need to decide which policy will best meet the needs of the Harness racing industry by assessing the cost/benefit of each policy.

#### **Quality Assurance Officer**

Deb Tsang, Quality Assurance Officer, reported all internal blind samples sent to the screening sections of the laboratory this month have been correctly identified.

The results for the second Racing Medication and Testing Consortium External Quality Assessment Program, RMTC EQAP, proficiency set have been submitted ahead of the reporting deadline to LGC Standards in the United Kingdom. The successful evaluation of 20 proficiency samples a year is a requirement for RMTC Laboratory Accreditation. The final report on PETRL's results should be available in a few weeks.

Equipment inventory updates and equipment calibrations are ongoing. The Quality Assurance System controlled document review is almost complete. All document changes are recorded and are circulated to the laboratory staff for acknowledgement. The supporting documents required for an on-site assessment this spring will be submitted to the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation, A2LA, and this month.

The PETRL Technical Management Committee will meet this month as required by the A2LA, and the PETRL Quality Assurance Program. This committee meets in order to continually improve the effectiveness of the laboratory's technical systems. The components of the Quality Assurance System will also be reviewed to ensure the continuing suitability and relevance of the system.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

A motion was made by Deputy Strathmeyer, seconded by Chairman Newman, and unanimously passed to approve 7. (a). 1; the Standardbred full race card simulcast schedules for the month of February 2016 at The Meadows, Pocono Downs, and Harrah's Philadelphia Casino and Racetrack.

A motion was made by Deputy Strathmeyer, seconded by Chairman Newman, and unanimously passed to approve 7. (a). 2; the Thoroughbred full race card simulcast schedules for the month of February 2016 at Parx Racing, Penn National, and Presque Isle Downs.

A motion was made by Deputy Strathmeyer, seconded by Chairman Newman, and unanimously passed to approve 7. (b). 1; The request from Washington Trotting Association, Inc. / Mountain Laurel Racing to conduct outdoor wagering at Harmar off-track wagering facility on the following dates: Friday, May 6, 2016 (Kentucky Oaks Day); Saturday, May 7, 2016 (Kentucky Derby Day); Saturday, May 21, 2016 (Preakness Day) and Saturday, June 11, 2016 (Belmont Day).

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman Newman recognized Poconos Racetrack Manager Michele Ruddy on her distinguished career with the Harness Racing Commission as she retired in January.

Chairman Newman noted that he would do whatever he could to help Fair Racing succeed and they great job they do for the sport of harness racing.

Chairman Newman announced the next meeting will be held on February 18, 2016, at Harrah's Philadelphia in Chester, PA.

- Executive Session 10:00 A.M
- Regular Session 11:00 A.M.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Newman adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
/S/ George Crawford  
Executive Secretary of Harness Racing