



THE NEW YORK RACING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Testimony Before The New York State Senate Standing Committee on Racing, Gaming and Wagering and the Senate Standing Committee on Domestic Animal Welfare

Public Hearing: The Welfare of Racehorses
June 5, 2019

Chairman Addabbo and Committee members:

There is no single issue more critical to the future of thoroughbred racing than the health and welfare of the horses competing at racetracks in New York and around the country. The New York Racing Association, Inc. (NYRA) prioritizes safety protocols and procedures above all else and sets the industry standard in regard to safe racing operations.

NYRA has consistently shown a commitment to implement science-driven best practices to establish and maintain safe surfaces and facilities for its equine and human athletes. To meet this goal, NYRA has made significant capital investments in recent years to upgrade and modernize racing and training facilities.

We have also provided veterinary teams with the independent authority and resources required to properly monitor thoroughbred health and welfare.

These efforts have yielded meaningful results and led to demonstrably safer racing operations at Aqueduct Racetrack, Belmont Park and Saratoga Racecourse. NYRA's equine fatality rate, which is arrived at by comparing the incidence of catastrophic injuries to total number of horses competing, has remained well below the national average in each of the previous six years. In 2018, that rate fell to 1.20 which reflects 18 catastrophic injuries compared with 14,987 starters at Aqueduct, Belmont and Saratoga. The national average in 2018 was 1.68 per 1000 starters.

NYRA performs continuous testing of racing and training surfaces before, during and after each race meet and has pioneered a system that utilizes both daily measurements and enhanced data collection to create and maintain safe and consistent track surfaces. All track maintenance work is meticulously documented, logged and subsequently shared in real time both internally and with outside consultants employed to provide added expertise.

Through this commitment to track safety and science, NYRA has earned and maintained accreditation for all three racetracks by the National Thoroughbred Racing Association Safety & Integrity Alliance, which have earned "best practice" ratings in virtually every area examined by the Alliance.

NYRA employs the largest and most qualified team of veterinarians of any racing organization in the country and has implemented elevated levels of scrutiny during training and racing to enhance safety at each NYRA track.



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Race day inspections are performed by four NYRA Veterinarians to regulate the safety and welfare of all thoroughbred racehorses at each NYRA track. Veterinarians personally inspect each horse entered to race on the morning of the race date to ensure that the horse - in their professional opinion - is fit to compete.

This inspection includes: a review of previous pre-race inspection findings for the horse; physical inspection of the horse in the stall; observation of the horse outside the stall while being walked and jogged in hand away from and toward the examining veterinarian; discussion with the trainer or their designee regarding changes in physical findings or layoffs.

NYRA Regulatory Veterinarians continuously observe the horses at each stage of the pre-race process. This observation begins with the walk over from the barn area, includes each stage of the saddling process, post parade, warm up and transitions only when all horses are in the starting gate ready to race.

NYRA Regulatory Veterinarians have the authority to recommend a scratch to the Stewards at any time prior to the running of the race.

NYRA is a proud member of a coalition of leading thoroughbred racing associations and organizations committed to phasing out the use of the medication Furosemide (Lasix) beginning in 2020 and eliminating the use of Lasix in stakes races held at their racetracks beginning in 2021.

Under the new program, beginning on January 1, 2020, two-year old horses would not be allowed to be treated with Lasix within 24 hours of a race. Beginning in 2021, the same prohibition would extend to all horses participating in any stakes race at coalition tracks. Accordingly, in 2021 the races comprising the Triple Crown would all be run under the new rules regarding race day medication.

Advancing measures to ensure safe racing and training is an ongoing process that requires constant attention and close coordination with horsemen, regulators, owners, racing officials and industry partners. While our collective efforts have yielded positive results, there is always more work to be done and we are constantly striving to enhance safety protocols in the course of active dialogue with independent experts, veterinarians and scientists in relevant fields.

NYRA's commitment to equine safety has been noticed.

We refer you to an Associated Press article of yesterday June 4th:

"Belmont features on of the safest racing surfaces in US"

- "The home of the Belmont Stakes is laps ahead of other U.S. racetracks when it comes to keeping horses safe."
- "They've just turned the corner and not all the racetracks have kind of turned that corner where they feel like this is how they manage it," said Dr. Mick Peterson, executive director of the

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PARK**

SARATOGA

NYRA BETS



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Racing Surfaces Testing Laboratory in Lexington, Kentucky. "And that's really where they're in the lead."

- "They keep copious amounts of data using ground-penetrating radar and sensors that track the moisture content in the tracks. They also have a weather station that tracks rainfall and wind speed. In addition to the advanced information, Kozak puts the onus on his employees to pay attention to details when watering or raking the 1 ½-mile dirt oval and separate training track, or filling divots on one of the two turf courses."
- "The way they do things up there, that is going to be our industry benchmark."
- "Peterson describes what's happening in New York as a positive "culture change."
- "They definitely are the elite," the jockey said. "They hold themselves to a higher standard that others will soon follow."

I thank the Committees for allowing NYRA to testify before you today on this important matter.

Sincerely,

David O'Rourke
CEO and President