

## **Pennsylvania State Horse Racing Commission**

March 25, 2015

### **Minutes**

A meeting of the Pennsylvania State Horse Racing Commission was held on Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at New Bolton Center, Kennett Square, PA, at 11:30 A.M.

In attendance representing the Commission were Alan Novak, Chairman; Dr. Corinne Sweeney, Commissioner; Thomas Jay Ellis, Commissioner; Walt Remmert, Acting Executive Secretary of Horse Racing; 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 Novak called the meeting to order and announced the meeting was duly advertised in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

Chairman Novak stated that the Commission held an executive session in which the Commission discussed personal matters. No other agency business was transacted.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney, seconded by Commissioner Ellis, and unanimously passed, to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2015, commission meeting.

### **OLD BUSINESS (STATISTICAL REPORTS)**

Chairman Novak requested the statistical highlights for the past month.

#### **Parx Racing**

Joe Wilson, Chief Operating Officer, reported the previous months and year to date statistics. Mr. Wilson is hoping to have the Monarch dispute solved in the coming months as it has been very difficult to have fixed. With the weather now breaking they will start the barn re building for 2015.

#### **Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association**

Michael Ballezzi, Executive Director of PTHA, was not present and no oral report was given.

#### **Penn National Race Course**

Eric Johnston, Director of Racing, reported on the previous months and year to date statistic totals. The Monarch dispute is still a concern; the hope is that it will be resolved soon. May 30<sup>th</sup> is Penn Mile day and April 25<sup>th</sup> is fan appreciation day, planning in June to have camel and ostrich races at the track which should be a good time.

### **Presque Isle Downs & Racetrack**

Debbie Howells, Director of Racing for Presque Isle Downs, reported on the previous month and year to date statistical totals. The backside opens on April 17<sup>th</sup> and the stall applications were mailed out last week. Presque Isle is in the process of hiring for the new racing season.

### **PA Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association**

Mr. Mostoller, Executive Director of the PA HBPA stated that the new dormitory at Penn National is open and will have orientation on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The grooms' quarters look great and the horsemen are very proud of it. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony and everyone is invited to attend.

### **Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association**

Brian Sanfratello, Executive Director for the PHBA, noted that the 2014 awards banquet will be May 30<sup>th</sup> at Penn National and the Annual meeting for the breeders will be May 20<sup>th</sup> in Kennett Square, PA.

On the website for the breeders it will be showing the great things that are happening in Pennsylvania. Promote activities and ideas that the PHBA comes up with such as sending out pictures of the babies being born this year trying to promote the good things that are happening here in Pennsylvania. The marketing team has come up with some great ideas that will be done over the next few months, one of them being a "welcome wagon" for new breeders in Pennsylvania.

### **RESEARCH**

Dr. Mary Robinson, Acting Director of the Pennsylvania Equine Toxicology and Research Lab, and of the University of Pennsylvania, presented:

Cobalt: A small amount of cobalt is necessary for mammalian life, and it forms the core of vitamin B12. However, cobalt also has the potential to increase red blood cell production when administered at a high dosage, and was used for this purpose in humans before safer drugs were developed to stimulate red blood cell production (erythropoietin). Toxic effects of cobalt have been shown in humans to occur at doses that are effective at increasing red blood cell production. The administration of bulk cobalt to race horses has been reported to regulatory authorities as an attempt to increase red blood cell production, and toxic effects in horses have been demonstrated by some laboratories when very high doses were administered intravenously. An increase in equine red blood cell production has not been demonstrated by any of the studies in horses.

Cobalt-containing vitamin products are not regulated by the FDA and cobalt is also included in sweet feed by feed producers. Studies were performed to determine if these products would affect plasma and urine concentrations of cobalt. Some of these products did increase

plasma and urine concentrations. Ongoing studies are evaluating the effect of repeated administration of these products, as the label instructs the consumer to do. In addition, the cobalt concentration in the PA race horse population (250 Thoroughbreds and 250 Standardbreds) was evaluated and horses that had clearly received inappropriate amounts of cobalt were identified. Statistical analysis was performed and these data will be compared with data from other jurisdictions at the upcoming ARCI/AORC conference in April.

**Biomarker/Extracorporeal Shockwave Project:** Extracorporeal shockwave is used to treat tendon, ligament, and bone injuries in horses and humans. It is applied externally to the injured structure and provides a period of analgesia. The concern is that it is being used inappropriately to block pain sensation by the horse shortly prior to racing, enabling the horse to perform when injured. The only way to try to detect ESWT with current post-race testing plasma samples is to look for biomarkers of ESWT or of the injury that is being treated. Several approaches to identify biomarkers have been pursued. Some exciting results from one of these approaches has shown that within the race population, a few individuals were found to have elevated biomarkers consistent with ESWT treatment and/or disease in the horse. Ongoing studies will evaluate horses with known diseases in order to provide a positive control. Using these markers may enable us to identify horses at risk of catastrophic injury.

There are currently 16 manuscripts in preparation, three manuscripts at various stages of the review process, and one manuscript was recently accepted.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER**

All internal blind samples sent to the screening sections of the laboratory this month have been correctly identified. An internal blind sample was also correctly identified by the DNA section.

All internal blind samples sent to the screening sections of the laboratory this month have been correctly identified. The first blood gas proficiency set of the year has already been analyzed by the technicians who analyze the Commission's TCO<sub>2</sub> samples. I received notification that the proficiency test passed with excellent results. Training for Harrah's Philadelphia blood gas technicians will be conducted at the PA Racing Commission Research Barn at New Bolton Center this week.

The laboratory's internal audit was conducted in December and January and all staff participated. All technical systems and records were audited for compliance to American Association for Laboratory Accreditation, A2LA, ISO/IEC 17025 criteria and in-house quality control requirements. The findings of the internal audit were that all systems are in compliance and my final report will be submitted to A2LA and the Commission.

An updated laboratory equipment inventory was provided to the Commission last month. The analytical balances and thermometers have been calibrated. The operating temperatures of the waterbaths and dri-blocks have been verified. The temperature monitoring system for the refrigerators and freezers will be updated, verified and calibrated next month.

The new server was successfully installed earlier this month

### **NEW BUSINESS**

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney, seconded by Commissioner Ellis and unanimously passed to approve item 5.a.(1); approval of the thoroughbred full race card simulcast schedules for the month of April 2015 at Penn National, Parx Racing, and Presque Isle Downs.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to approve item 5.a.(2)<sup>1</sup>; approval of the harness full race card simulcast schedules for the month of April 2015, at The Meadows, Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, and Harrah's Philadelphia Casino and Racetrack.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to approve item 5.b. (1); Parx Racing request to conduct three Handicapping contests at the Track and Turf Clubs on Saturday, March 28; Sunday, June 28; and Saturday, September 26.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to approve item 5.b. (2); Parx Racing request to add a new simulcast site: a Harness track called Cape Breton, Inc. (Northside Downs) located in Nova Scotia, Canada.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to ratify item 5.b. (3); Presque Isle Downs request to add Bettor Racing, Inc. licensed in South Dakota to the sites approved to wager on live races from Presque Isle Downs in May.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to ratify item 5.b. (4); Presque Isle Downs request to add PariBet, LLC. licensed in South Dakota to the sites approved to wager on live races from Presque Isle Downs in May.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to approve item 5.b. (5); Presque Isle Downs request to line for Mutuels on the second floor on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. There will be a Craps Tournament that day and the cameras need to be adjusted. The self-bet terminals will remain operational as will the TV's still showing the races.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeney and seconded by Commissioner Ellis and passed to approve item 5.b. (6); Presque Isle Downs requests approval to conduct a Match Play Promotion on import simulcast races for the final weekend of March 27, 28 & 29, 2015. Along with the direct mail promotion a newspaper ad will run with a \$5.00 match play coupon.

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<sup>1</sup>Concerning Item 5.a. (2); "Consideration for approval of the Harness full race card simulcast schedules for the month of April 2015, at The Meadows, Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs and Harrah's Philadelphia. Approval is pending submission of the fully executed simulcast agreements to the Commission Office." Chairman Alan Novak abstained from voting on this item due to a business relationship with The Meadows.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Black, the jockey representative from Parx, brought a positive note to the Commission meeting by thanking Mr. Wilson for his efforts on resolving their issue and hopes that the great communication continues in the future.

Chairman Novak announced the next commission meeting will be held April 14, 2015, at Parx Racing in Bensalem, PA.

Executive Session: 10:30 A.M. in conference room

Public Meeting: 11:30 A.M. in Cotillion room

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Novak adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Walt Remmert  
Acting Executive Secretary