

Charles Town Racehorse Death Toll Climbs to Eight in 2021, Penn. National Gaming Seeks to Quash Story

CHARLES TOWN, WEST VIRGINIA , USA, March 18, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal Wellness Action (AWA), the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF), and the Center for a Humane Economy (CHE) are calling on Penn National Gaming to investigate the rash of horse deaths that have occurred at its Hollywood Casino Charles Town Race Course in West Virginia in 2021.

This year, there have been eight on-track deaths of horses at the facility. "Lanesborough" and "Nicaloe" were each reported to have "suffered fatal injury" and were "euthanized on track" on February 27th, and most recently "Uncle Funky" was reported to have suffered a "fatal injury" and was "euthanized on track" on March the 10th. Other deaths at Charles Town this year include "Best Shot," "Venetian Drive," "Don'tmesswithbull," "Mio's Long Term," and "Paul's Plunder."



Charles Town Race Course operated by Penn National Gaming | Photo Credit: Animal Wellness Action

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We're appalled as the body count continues to multiply at Charles Town."

*Marty Irby, executive director
at Animal Wellness Action*

The Charles Town track has also been widely criticized in the past for shuttling poor-performing horses right from the track to kill buyers, who then ship horses to slaughter in Canada or Mexico for export to Belgium, Italy, and Japan for human consumption.

"We're appalled as the body count continues to multiply at

Charles Town," said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action who [testified](#) before Congress in 2020 in support of the [Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act](#). "The track is operated by Penn National Gaming, a publicly-traded company and we expect better – so should

investors, the industry, and the betting public. Penn National should adopt a set of reforms – banning the movement of its horses to kill buyers, imposing a ban on the use of whips, and imposing a ban on race-day doping of horses at its tracks, even before the new federal law goes into effect.”

“It’s shameful to see the rampant deaths at Charles Town, and we will continue to press Penn National Gaming to implement much-needed reforms,” said Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns at the Center for a Humane Economy and a lifelong horseman. “Our iconic American horses deserve better.”

Mr. Irby visited the track earlier in the week and was set to interview with a local television station [on-site until officials with the track objected to the presence of AWA and](#) the local reporter.

The latest deaths come on the heels of a story in the Journal-News and Associated Press in February that revealed the first three deaths at Charles Town.

Irby, who was recently honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, II for his work to protect American equines led the charge within the animal protection space in support of the

Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA) that was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The measure was championed by U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and U.S. Reps. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and Andy Barr, R-Ky., and bans race-day doping in U.S. horse racing and creates a uniform national standard for drug testing overseen by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) that will take effect mid-2022. The



Entrance sign at the Hollywood Casino Charles Town Races complex | Photo credit: George Sheldon (Shutterstock Royalty-free stock photo ID: 1640257198)



AWA executive director Marty Irby testifying at a House hearing on H.R. 1754 in January 2020

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Jockey Club, the New York-based breed registry for Thoroughbreds, The Breeders' Cup, New York Racing Association, Keeneland, Water, Hay, Oats Alliance, and others were also instrumental in working for the passage of the anti-doping legislation, but Penn National Gaming was not active in supporting the anti-doping legislation.

Irby and Beckstead both at AWA and CHE, and in previous roles have long advocated ending the use of the whip, and for the passage of the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, led by U.S. Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., and U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. that would ban horse slaughter on U.S. soil, and ban the transport of American equines for the purposes of slaughter.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy ("the Center") is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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