

# Animal Wellness Action Says Moving Racing Venue an Insufficient Response to Crisis of Horse Deaths at Churchill Downs

*If the track surface was the singular cause of the rash of horse deaths at Churchill Downs, changing the racing venue might make sense*

LOUISVILLE, KY, UNITED STATES, June 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wayne Pacelle, president of

[Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#), reacted to the news that Churchill Downs is going to suspend racing for two or three days next week but then continue its June calendar of racing at Ellis Park in Henderson, Ky.

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We renew our request that Churchill Downs suspend its racing schedule until there is a proper forensic analysis. This is a response, but it feels like a shell-game response.”

*Wayne Pacelle, Animal Wellness Action*

Said Pacelle:

“If the track surface was the singular cause of the rash of horse deaths at Churchill Downs, changing the racing venue might make sense. But it’s apparent that there’s more at work here than track surface threats. We renew

our request that Churchill Downs suspend its racing schedule until there is a proper forensic analysis of the horse deaths and a comprehensive plan to remediate future deaths. This is a response, but it feels like a shell-game response.”

The call for a temporary racing suspension comes after the unnerving and unacceptable drumbeat of horse deaths on the track there since racing resumed just weeks ago. Churchill Downs has been the stage for 12 horse deaths in a month’s time. That rate of loss is higher than the rash of deaths at Santa Anita Park in 2019, when 42 horses died on the track, observed Animal Wellness Action.

“The show cannot just go on, and the leadership of the track should hit the pause button for the well-being of the horses and of the industry itself,” added Louisvillian Joseph Grove, director of communications for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy.

The shutdown of activities at Churchill Downs would apply only to live racing, not simulcasting of other races from tracks that have not experienced a surge in horse fatalities.

Recently, Animal Wellness Action called on leaders in the racing industry and the new Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) to embrace the goal of “no young, healthy horses dying on tracks in training or competition” with the new Authority to suspend trainers who put horses into competition and do not get off the track alive. Late this week, Churchill Downs announced other changes, including changes in the purse structure that may be incentivizing trainers to enter horses in races where they should not be competing.

After a long delay, the sport’s new national governing body began implementation of a national race-day antidoping regulatory plan this month. The Authority, if it shows independence and integrity, can bring long-needed uniformity to a patchwork system of regulatory control built around the work of 38 distinct state horse racing commissions. The Authority also has broad power to institute changes to improve horse safety at Thoroughbred tracks.

#### ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. Twitter: @AWAction\_News

The Center for a Humane Economy is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) whose mission is to help animals by helping forge a more 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. The Center believes helping animals helps us all. Twitter: @TheHumaneCenter

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