

Louisiana Reverses Rules to Loosen Drug Regulations in Horse Racing After Pressure from Animal Wellness Groups

Louisiana still remains an outlier in refusing to join Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Authority program

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal wellness groups are pleased that in a matter of days, the Louisiana State Racing Commission voted unanimously to reverse two of its controversial “emergency rules” to loosen use of drugs that have proven dangerous and deadly to horses in the world of horse racing. These rules would have gone into effect Saturday.



Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act | Photo: Jana Germano

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy along with many Thoroughbred racing organizations had last week condemned the racing commission’s swift and shocking decision to relax the use of horseracing drugs that are often abused, applying pressure on officials that resulted in their reversing the decision.

“We are very relieved, because the new commission rules placed both horses and riders at great risk of injury and even death, and it would have had terrible consequences for the Thoroughbred racing industry,” said Fred Hudson, director of Equine Welfare for Animal Wellness Action.

The rules had focused on lax use of clenbuterol, a substance used to treat respiratory problems but can mimic steroids that help build muscle. That potential abuse is why clenbuterol is banned completely in Quarter Horse racing in Louisiana. The emergency rules had also allowed for doubling the allowable injection of Depo-Medrol or methylprednisolone, a steroid injected into joints to treat pain and swelling, which can damage joints when overused and lead to horse breakdowns.

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy continue to call on this commission to join the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority’s Anti-Doping and Medication



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Control program (HISA), which is a federal racing authority working to establish national medication rules that will eliminate race-day doping of horses and establish other reasonable horse-safety standards.

"If this racing commission were operating under HISA, it would never have instituted its lax rules in the first place and would be always acting in the best interest of horses to prevent future tragic deaths from liberal use of medications." said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and a key architect of the national law.

HISA rules on these particular medications in question are very strict, and trainers can be suspended for up to two

years for violating their use.

Louisiana's Rep. Clay Higgins is the sponsor of legislation that animal welfare advocates say is falsely labeled as the [Racehorse Health and Safety Act H.R. 5693](#), which is designed to erase HISA.

Stricter regulations on medications in horse racing have led to record years in terms of equine safety overall in 2022 and at HISA tracks in 2023 as evidence that the more-restrictive approach to corticosteroids, clenbuterol, and other controlled medications is working. In 2023 HISA tracks saw a 32.5% lower breakdown rate than non-HISA 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. X: @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. X: @TheHumaneCenter

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