

Animal Wellness Groups Support Churchill Downs in Possibly Canceling Louisiana Derby Over Weakened Horse Protections

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

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, June 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal wellness groups support efforts by Churchill Downs Inc. to cancel the Louisiana Derby if the Louisiana Racing Commission does not fully rescind recent changes to its medication rules for race horses in that state.

After much pressure applied from Animal Wellness Action and other thoroughbred organizations, including from Churchill Downs, the commission had earlier this week reversed its approval on rules regarding use of the most controversial medications — clenbuterol and Depo-Medrol — because of abuse potential, but still left other changes intact, according to Churchill Downs CEO William “Bill” Carstanjen in a letter sent to the commission Executive Director Stephen Landry this week.

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“This racing commission could save itself a lot of time and grief by simply putting the welfare of horses first,” said Fred Hudson, director of Equine Welfare for Animal Wellness Action. “The best action the state of Louisiana can take today for long-term welfare of its race horses is to join the Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Authority Program.”

Additional rules that need to be reversed are those that establish a new set of weakened controlled therapeutic

medication standards inconsistent with every other racing jurisdiction in the country. In essence, the Louisiana Thoroughbred racing medication standards no longer comply with any nationally



Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act | Photo: Jana Germano

or internationally recognized standards.

In response to the CDI threat the commission scheduled an emergency meeting for today at 3 p.m. EDT.

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 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 would simply join HISA, there wouldn't be any threat coming from Churchill Downs, or these multiple meets," said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and a key architect of the national law. "Louisiana's racing industry can align itself with mainstream horse safety norms by embracing concerns raised by peers in the horse racing industry and by animal welfare groups."

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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