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Notice To The Industry

New Rules on urging the Horse in Racing effective September 1

New Ontario rules governing the urging of horses in racing will be in place effective September 1, 2009. The rules – which will apply to Standardbred, Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing – take into consideration the safety of the participants, the welfare of the horse and the perception of the product.

The Ontario Racing Commission (ORC) launched the process of developing new rules on the urging of horses one year ago. Following a special meeting held at the invitation of ORC Executive Director John Blakney, industry working groups were established. With input from industry members, the respective breed groups submitted proposed rule changes to the ORC Board. After careful consideration, the rules were subsequently approved by the Board in early summer.

ORC Chair Rod Seiling acknowledged the considerable effort undertaken by members of the racing community. “We want to recognize the work of the multi-breed working groups and thank all those who shared their comments on the proposed changes.”

He pointed out that this close examination of the styles and practices on urging of horses in racing is in keeping with the ORC’s mandate. “The health and welfare of the horse and the safety of participants are front and centre to our efforts to regulate racing. The time was right to move forward on this issue. We believe these new rules are fair, enforceable and appropriate for today’s racing industry.”

Among the provisions in the new rules: for Standardbred racing, there is now a requirement to keep a line in each hand for the entire race. Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse rules now stipulate only a ‘humane or cushion’ riding crop may be used, and the horse must be allowed time to respond before it may be used again.

New penalty guidelines are in place to reflect the importance of adhering to these new rules on urging of the horse. To view the new rules, and the corresponding penalty guidelines, see the attached directives. The information can also be viewed on the ORC web site at www.ontarioracingcommission.ca.

In order to facilitate an orderly and workable transition to the new rules, training and orientation sessions are now underway for ORC officials. Special paddock meetings and education sessions for racing participants will be held shortly across the province.

Rob McKinney
Acting Executive Director