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Notice to the Industry

Reminder of New Rules on Urging the Horse

The new rules governing the urging of horses in Ontario racing are now in their fourth week and over 1,000 races have been run. The Ontario Racing Commission (ORC) is pleased with the efforts of racing participants to adapt to these rules and change/refine their driving or riding styles.

The benefits to the ORC's program of education and orientation prior to implementation are evident and the vast majority has adjusted in a seamless manner. Of particular note is that under the new driving/riding styles, a number of horses have registered new lifetime marks.

The new rules came into place after a year-long dialogue with the racing community and considerable work and effort undertaken by industry Working Groups. There was a great deal of discussion, and the Groups were very clear: the rules had to be specific, fair and consistently enforced, and the penalties needed to back up the rules. For its part, the ORC is committed to ensuring that racing officials approach each and every race with these goals.

Among the highlights of the new rules:

- for Standardbred racing, there is now a requirement to keep a line in each hand for the entire race, except for the adjustment of equipment;
- 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;
- For all breeds, new penalty guidelines are in place to reflect the importance of adhering to these new rules on urging of the horse.

In addition to protecting the health and welfare of the horse and the public's perception of racing, the design of these new rules was also intended to safeguard the fairness and level playing field of competition. In other words, no one should be able to gain an unfair advantage by breaking a rule – even in the heat of competition – by accepting a fine in order to win a bigger purse.

The ORC, the Working Groups and many in the racing community believe that the responsibility of competing fairly under the *Rule of Racing* needs to be shared among owners, trainers as well as the participants themselves. In this way, the racing public, including bettors, would be protected - knowing that every participant will play by the same rules and no one could side step the fairness aspect by 'just paying a fine'.

Racing in Ontario is changing and the ORC is committed to a continued dialogue with the racing community so that it can adjust to this change. This commitment may include refinements and adjustments to these rules, so that consistency, fairness and the integrity of racing will be maintained.

For more information and to view copies of the directives and rules, visit the ORC web site:
www.ontarioracingcommission.ca.

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