
News Release

For Immediate Release
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New EPO antibody test to be implemented in Ontario by fall 2003

Starting November 1, 2003, samples taken from horses racing in Ontario will undergo new tests for **EPO antibodies**. Any horse testing positive will be put on the Vet's List and will not be allowed to race for an extended period of time. The Ontario Racing Commission is introducing this newly established test to discourage the use of the banned substances erythropoietin (commonly known as EPO or Epogen) and darbepoetin.

Working in conjunction with the New York State Racing and Wagering Board to develop common protocols for testing, Ontario is taking the next step in the campaign to combat the use of this drug. In 2002, Ontario had established rules prohibiting the possession or use of EPO and darbepoetin.

EPO triggers the horse's body to produce more red blood cells, and is thought to improve performance by increasing the blood's oxygen carrying capacity. Regulators around the world are working to eliminate the use of these drugs because of its potential effects on performance and its detrimental impact on the health of the animal.

While new rules have yet to be finalized, it is anticipated that a horse that tests positive for the antibodies will not be permitted to race and will be placed on the Vet's List for an extended period of time or until such time as the horse no longer tests positive.

The test to be implemented in November by the Commission will be used to identify that a horse has been administered EPO and will provide the Commission with the tool to remove a horse from competition. The ORC recognizes that this course of action may penalize individuals who may not have administered the drug to the horse but the Commission has determined that it is in the best interests of racing that the horse not be allowed to continue to race under these conditions.

The Commission will also be introducing this test for all race horses that have died within 60 days of having been worked, entered or qualified to race in Ontario and that are submitted for post mortem under the new Death Registry rules that came into effect January 1, 2003.

Ontario and New York will be working closely over the next few months to establish protocol and will be communicating more information to the industry as decisions are made. The Ontario Racing Commission will also be closely following the work that continues in the scientific field to develop a test for the drug EPO and when such a test is developed, will be working with the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency for its adoption in Ontario.

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