

Testimony of Jack Van Berg

Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

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In order to bring integrity back to the great sport of horse racing, the first and most important act should be to implement the most sophisticated drug testing available. It should be funded by a small percentage of the simulcast money; approximately 1/8 of 1%. Three labs should conduct the testing—one in the west; one in the east; one in the Midwest. It would be the responsibility of the trainer, or his representative to monitor the collection of the sample(s) after the race. Half of the test sample should be immediately frozen and put in a locker that requires two keys to open. One key should be held by the trainer and another one held by the lab technician. The other half of the sample should be sent to the designated lab and tested. If this sample is positive, then the trainers and lab technician would unlock the other half of the sample and send it to one of the other designated labs. If the sample is also positive, then very strict penalties should be imposed.

As for medication, it would be in the best interest of this grand sport and these grand equine athletes to abolish any and all medications. This would mean no race day threshold levels of Lasix, Bute, Steroids or any other medication. The present rule permitting the use of steroids and other drugs have comprised the integrity of horse racing and has been a major factor in attendance and for interest falling to an all time low. Steroids do not give these “non-consenting” athletes the time they need to develop and mature. Steroids given to young horses, they cause an unnatural increase in muscle mass and make them heavier than their still maturing bone structure can often tolerate. Let the horse develop on his own and the trainer should be enough of a horseman to know when he has matured.

As for racing surfaces, they should be a good sandy loam and maintained for the soft cushion. I do not think it helps for fans to be concerned about how fast a race is run. The safety of the horse should be the priority and not how fast the track is. On big days, most race tracks see how fast they can get the track. The surface should be maintained at the same depth at all times.

I would like to thank everyone for inviting me to testify before the House Committee. The sport of Horse Racing is one of the greatest sports of all times. I will always be willing to do whatever I can to bring back the greatness and integrity of this great sport.