

STONE FARM

"We're trying to raise you a good horse."

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing today and for your consideration of legislation to ban race day medications in horse racing.

At one time, Thoroughbred racing was the number one spectator sport in America. It was held in high esteem by the general public, and there was excitement and anticipation all across America about who would win the Kentucky Derby or maybe even the Triple Crown. There was always a superstar to follow, like Seabiscuit, Man O'War and Secretariat, that raised the level of enthusiasm for the sport. Back then, in the fifties, horses averaged 45 lifetime starts in their careers. Now it is down to a lifetime average of 13. This is an astounding drop of 71%. Since genetics change every million years or so according to Charles Darwin, what is the cause of this drastic increase in the unsoundness of the Thoroughbred racehorse?

Not only has the number of starts drastically decreased, but also the rate of breakdowns and fatally injured horses. Moreover, the rate of injured jockeys has increased along with a loss of public confidence for the sport which has caused owners to leave the game. Given that the track surfaces are even safer today, we would naturally expect that our horses would have more lifetime starts and be sounder than their predecessors. So, what is different today in our industry that did not exist in the past? What could be the culprit that is undermining the soundness of our horses? The answer is clear.

The increase of breakdowns and unsoundness parallels the spread of Lasix as a race day drug in the 1970's and the 1980's, the earliest report of its use being a dose administered to Northern Dancer the day he won the 1964 Kentucky Derby, long before it was legalized in any racing jurisdiction. Only five percent of all horses are bleeders and yet almost a hundred percent receive Lasix on race day. There is only one reason for this. Lasix is a powerful diuretic that allows a race horse to shed 20-30 pounds at race time, thus making it a performance enhancing drug. In addition to Lasix, nearly 100% of racehorses run with Butazolidin, Ketofen or Banamine in their systems along with other "therapeutic drugs".

Sadly, competing financial interests of those who administer drugs, and the lure of enhancing performance have become the drivers of our industry. Recently, TOBA (Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association) took a poll and 75% of the owners and breeders voted to stop race day drugging. The fans have also said they don't want it. According to The McKinsey Report, 75% of the population regards racing as a sport in which drug use runs rampant, and we are losing 4% of our fan base a year. So, if the owners don't want it and the fans don't want it, who does? Well, the veterinarians and the big drug companies want it. Why? Drugs are money. Big money. The needle goes in, the money comes out. They make the money and the industry and the breed are destroyed. The fans leave. Our foreign buyers leave. Owners leave. We become obsolete, a thing of the past, a once great, disgraced industry.

With precipitous declines in both attendance and wagering at our tracks, compounded by plummeting bloodstock sales, it is apparent that Thoroughbred racing is at a crossroads.

The industry has suffered a loss of confidence and respect with its fan base and the general public. Countless reports of trainers being charged with doping their horses, coupled with the destruction of horses due to horrific injuries on the track, cast our sport as something other than beautiful and noble. Today, fans and casual observers who have historically supported the industry are not interested in being associated with the abuse of animals and wide spread cheating by the use of performance-enhancing drugs. We should also remember, abused horses equate to abused jockeys.

Recently the Kentucky Racing Commission tried to do away with race-day drugs, but failed because of the fear that other states would not follow suit and that Kentucky would be driving a nail in its own coffin because horses would move to other states with more lenient drug rules. There is no uniformity in the 38 racing jurisdictions. People are at odds with one another. Recently, when some of us were critical of TOBA (Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association) for not pushing ahead with drug reform, a very high ranking member of the Jockey Club accused us of “shooting our own troops”. All we are trying to do is rally the troops to protect our horses, to protect our jockeys and to protect the integrity of our sport. However, we cannot do this alone. It is my hope that the Jockey Club, TOBA, the NTRA (National Thoroughbred Racing Association), the Jockey’s Guild and the RCI (Racing Commissioners International) will get behind the Interstate Horseracing Improvement Act. This is a strategy that will save our industry. If you want our industry to survive, use it.

In concluding, why has the horse industry been talking about stopping race day medication for decades with few tangible remedies? The answer is because there were no remedies until now, and that remedy is the amendment to the IHA called the IHIA. If anyone

has a better or more workable plan, please present it. For years, all we have had is hope and hot air. Our industry's partnership with the Federal Government gave us simulcasting. Now let's guarantee that races being simulcast in the U.S. are run free of race day medication.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue which is vitally important to the racing industry.

Good morning