

Testimony of Glenn Thompson
Subcommittee on Health Field Hearing
“A Review of Efforts to Protect Jockeys and Hoses in Horseracing”
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Unionville High School, 750 Unionville Road, Kennett Square, PA

My name is Glenn Thompson and I welcome the opportunity to testify at this hearing in an effort to help make the changes that are needed to the great sport of racing. I have been a thoroughbred trainer for over 30 years and I have never had a positive drug test and I have never had to put a horse down on the track on race day.

I recently wrote a book, *The Tradition of Cheating in the Sport of Kings*, in an effort to return horsemanship and sportsmanship to the sport of racing. You can find more information about my book at <http://sportofkingsnovel.com/>.

There is a culture of drugs that has taken over racing. Anyone that has chosen to train horses in the last 35 years would have had a very difficult time avoiding the trap that we have fallen into concerning drugs and racehorses, and I include myself in that group.

From the time you start your first hot walking job until you take out your trainer's license you were taught, if a horse has a problem, you do whatever it takes to get them healthy to race. If there is an ankle problem, you give the horse bute (phenylbutazone, which is an anti-inflammatory analgesic), if a horse has a bleeding problem, you give him Lasix (furosemide), if a filly is in season, you give her a drug to take her out of season.

Back before the use of drugs became so common we had answers to these problems that did not require medication. If a horse had an ankle, we used a whirlpool, ice, and hose. When the fillies came into season, we used to take 10 pennies and put them in the water bucket and wait for them to come out of season. Back in the day, we used horsemanship to overcome our problems, but just like everything else in today's world we fell into the trap of the quick fix. Thus, our horses and every aspect of racing have suffered.

Years ago we didn't need the Lasix as often because we didn't use bute and steroids right before a race. I find it interesting that if a person goes for surgery one of the most important things that the doctors stress is not to use any NSAIDS (Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs) within a week of the surgery due to the risk of bleeding. We allow our horses to be given shots of NSAIDS 24 hours before they race and then wonder why they bleed.

I feel very strongly that the people that oversee racing should shoulder a large portion of the blame for the problems that we are now facing. Year after year they have made it very easy to cheat and have done nothing to correct the problem.

They say all the right things and talk a good game, but I would give them a very low grade on their effectiveness. As a result, some of the horses that are paying their salaries are losing their lives on the track. They all need to look in the mirror and take their job more seriously.

I have come up with a list of what I feel needs to be done to help deal with the drug culture, the cheating, and the ethics problems we are now facing. I want it understood, that I do not want the government to get involved in regulating racing unless of course, some of the things on this list and other good ideas from qualified horsemen are not followed. If the changes are not made in the next six months I then urge the government to step in and replace all these people that have been sitting on their hands for all these years and make the needed changes.

1. Lasix - Lasix is the biggest hurdle we have to overcome. Since the racing community has allowed anabolic steroids and bute, respiratory bleeding has become a huge problem. I feel that in the past 10 years, two out of every 10 horses in training will bleed through Lasix. This is the reason that drugs like Kentucky Red, Clotol, Amicar, Premarin, Magnesium Sulfate, and Vitamin B1 are so popular on race day. They are adjuncts to the Lasix and would never be used if horses were not bleeding through Lasix.

In most states they are illegal on race day but are routinely given without fear of repercussion. The plan that I think makes the most sense is to immediately ban Lasix and all other medications for two year olds. I feel that we should be fine with the two year olds this year since we have banned the anabolic steroids and if we can get away from the NSAIDS. The next year the ban of the same medications would move on with the three year olds.

The two year olds that are not bleeding this year will hopefully be able to compete next year as three year olds without bleeding. It would be a great accomplishment to have a Lasix free Kentucky Derby in 2013 where none of the horses bleed.

In 2014, Lasix is finished for all horses. By this time I feel we will have a better handle on bleeding and hopefully some research can be done to help the older horses deal with the problems that they will face.

I know some people are going to say, let's just ban it now for all horses and that you are tired of waiting for change but I urge you to look out for the horses. To just suddenly stop Lasix, when a lot of the damage has already been done to those current racehorses, would be cruel and I feel we would see many horses bleed to death on the track.

The plan is a good one and it will work, and most importantly, it looks out for the horses.

Administration of Lasix - The racing commission veterinarians should be giving the Lasix shots. For years this has been the main source of the cheating. The vet goes in with the Lasix shot and gives two or three other illegal shots along with the Lasix. Keep the practicing vets out of the stalls. I think in other countries, no vet is even allowed on the backside on race day without a security guard along side. I hope things don't come to that but we all need to come to the understanding that enough is enough. The safety of our horses and the integrity of our sport need to be of everyone's utmost concern.

2. Surveillance - Every horse that is racing should have a mark on their stall to indicate that they are racing within 24 hours and every track should hire some investigators that are talented with video surveillance. The mark on the stall and the trainers and vets knowing that a camera might be close should act as a deterrent to any illegal drug use.

3. Penalties - If a vet is caught giving an illegal shot or drug on race day the penalty should be severe enough to make them come to the understanding that it is not worth their careers to give a fifteen dollar illegal shot on race day. I feel that any fines that are collected from any infractions should be put in a fund to help the retired racehorses and not go to the racing commissions.

Fines and suspensions are going to be tricky. I feel that if a vet or trainer is caught giving a shot on race day the fine and suspension should be severe. However if a horse comes up positive with therapeutic drugs that a trainer might have given a little to close to race day or a groom accidentally mixed up a feed tub we need to be a little more forgiving. There should still be a fine and suspension but not the severe 180 day and \$20,000 dollar type.

4. Horse Retirement - Money should be taken out of every race to help with the retirement programs for the horses. We simply do not do enough to help with this huge problem.

5. Shockwave Machines - Shockwave machines have become a problem. The recommended rules concerning the number of days that they can be used before a race are being ignored. I am hearing a lot of horses are being treated one and two days before a race and the rule is 10 days before the race. I feel this is very dangerous for the horses and that the shockwave machines should all be kept in the detention barn and when a horse is to be treated, the tattoo is checked and the date is noted.

6. Jockey Use of the Whip - The number of times a horse is hit should be limited in a race. I think seven would be a good number. As a trainer, I even cringe when I see a horse get hit all the way down the stretch, and I am used to it. I can't imagine how a first time fan or a child feels when they see a horse hit over and over again. This should also make it more of a challenge and

a sport for the jockeys. They are going to have to come up with a strategy and a plan and to be honest. I think it throws a twist into the race that will make it more interesting.

7. Breakdowns - All trainers should have their breakdowns listed and available at the tracks where they train. Any new owner coming into the business and wanting to hire a trainer should have this available in order to make a sound decision about who to hire. Far too often we see horses that are dropped way down in class that are pulled up or break down during a race. The horses are normally dropped down because of a known problem by the trainer and vet and they choose to roll the dice and run anyway. This needs to stop! If a trainer breaks down a high percentage of horses year after year, they should have their license pulled.

Any horse that breaks down in a race should have their vet records examined by a state veterinarian, including X-rays and medications given leading up to the race, to determine if there was any neglect.

If any horse that is claimed must be put down on the track, then the claim is voided.

8. Universal Rules - The Racing Commissions in all states must come up with universal rules concerning medications and all other rules that apply to racing. A trainer is hard pressed to know the rules from state to state. For there not to be a governing body that makes up the rules is one of the biggest problems in racing. I recommend that a meeting be set up for every state racing commission to attend. They should have 2 days to set up universal rules and if after two days they can't agree to a solid set of universal rules then there are no Graded Stakes in their state until they are signed on.