

## NYRA Safety Efforts

### Racing Surfaces and Facilities:

At NYRA, we know ensuring safety is not limited to race days. Before, during, and after each race, NYRA's Racing Surfaces Testing Laboratory (RSTL) team conducts extensive and continuous examinations of racing and training surfaces with leading independent testing and engineering firms to maintain safe and consistent track surfaces.

Before every meet, comprehensive sampling and analysis of the track material and surface is conducted by the RSTL team. Our team utilizes ground penetrating radar to measure if the composition and physical layout of the tracks are consistent and in good standing.

Once the overall surface is inspected, NYRA uses a machine called a Biomechanical Surface Tester that replicates the weight and speed of a horse's leading leg when running at full speed.

Prior to and upon completion of each race day, NYRA performs a second round of testing and collects data on the track's cushion depth, moisture content, and surface consistency to ensure the readings are in keeping with pre-determined safety criteria.

The data and measurements collected by NYRA are shared and reviewed internally and by leading independent testing and engineering consultants to provide further examinations and an increased level of expertise. All track maintenance decisions and actions are based on scientific data as well as on current and projected weather conditions.

In recent years, NYRA has reinforced its commitment to safety by investing in upgrading and modernizing our racing and training facilities. NYRA has upgraded turf courses at all three of its tracks - Belmont, Saratoga and Aqueduct - with modernized irrigation and drainage systems to improve the overall surface by increasing grass growth, reducing wear, and maintaining consistency.

Since 2013, NYRA has renovated and widened the Belmont Training Track and Oklahoma Training Track turf course at Saratoga to add running lanes, decrease congestion and improve overall safety. Additionally, all three tracks and both training tracks feature innovative alarm systems designed to quickly alert personnel in the event that a horse gets loose.

In 2017, NYRA completely renovated the main track at Aqueduct by replacing the inner dirt track with a second turf course, making it easier on a horse's body as the grass lessens the impact of each stride. The opening of the 2018 fall meet at Aqueduct featured the debut of the new surface, and since then all Aqueduct racing surfaces have been replaced or completely renovated.

Through this ongoing commitment to safety reinforced by the use of innovative and scientifically based approaches, NYRA has earned and maintained recognition for all three racetracks by the National Thoroughbred Racing Association Safety & Integrity Alliance, which, under the direction of NYRA Vice President of Racing Surfaces and Facilities Glen Kozak, have earned "best practice" ratings in virtually every area examined by the Alliance.

### **Veterinary Oversight:**

On race day, inspections of the thoroughbred racehorses are conducted by a team of four veterinarians led by NYRA's Veterinary Department Director Dr. Anthony Verderosa at each track to guarantee the welfare of the equine athletes.

**The multi-step process starts with a pre-race inspection:** A NYRA regulatory vet personally inspects each participating horse on the morning of the race date to ensure that the horse – to the best they can determine in their professional opinion - is fit to compete.

The inspection includes:

- A review of previous pre-race inspection reports of the horse
- Physical examination of the horse in the stall. This includes the measurement of the size, tenderness, and texture of both front legs as well as observations of any apparently abnormal structures in the hind legs;
- Observation of the horse outside the stall while it is walked and jogged;
- Discussion with the trainer or their designee regarding any changes in physical findings or layoffs.

**Pre-race horse observation:** NYRA regulatory vets observe the horses at each stage of the pre-race process. This begins with the walk over from the paddock to the barn area, followed by saddling, post parade, warm up, and does not end until all the horses are in the starting gate ready to race.

*Based on these observations, the NYRA vets have the authority to recommend the removal of a racehorse to the stewards at any time prior to the running of the race if they perceive a horse is sick, injured, or unable to properly perform.*

The vets continue to observe all horses during and after a race, including the unsaddling process and walk back to the barn area.

All information and data generated by the pre-race examination and race day observation is catalogued and recorded by NYRA regulatory vets creating a comprehensive medical report that includes details of past performances and training sessions.

### **Enhanced Levels of Assessment:**

To ensure the safety of horses placed on the steward's and/or veterinarian's list, as well as those that have not started within a set timeframe, NYRA implemented enhanced levels of monitoring and assessments in 2013.

**Steward's List:** Officials overseeing race meetings may place the name of any horse on the steward's list for any reason they may deem to be proper, effectively banning the horse from entering and competing in the race. The most common reason for placement on this list is poor performance, defined as being surpassed by at least 25 lengths in its last race.

**Veterinarian's List:** The veterinarian's list is designed as a preventative measure for unsound or unhealthy horses, excusing them from racing until they have recovered from a physical injury or illness. These horses are

identified as unable to participate during pre-race inspections or observations conducted either on the track or in the post-race test barn.

To be removed from this list, a horse must pass a pre-workout safety inspection, record a 4-furlong workout in 52 seconds or less before a NYRA regulatory vet, and pass a post-workout inspection and blood test for the presence of any medication above allowable thresholds.

*A horse is considered ineligible to compete if it's placed on the steward's or veterinarian's list.*

### **Collaborative Efforts with Industry Partners:**

NYRA shares its commitment and focus on safety with the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (NYTHA) and the New York State Gaming Commission (NYSGC), in partnership with industry leaders such as the National Thoroughbred Racing Association.

NYRA has implemented and refined the following policies and procedures in conjunction with NYTHA and the NYSGC to further enhance the safety of its racing operations:

- Formed the Equine Safety Review Board, a group comprised of NYRA veterinarians, track management and the New York State equine medical director, which investigates any catastrophic race day horse injury
- Created the Equine Safety Committee, comprised of members of the NYRA Board of Directors, who focus on continuous evaluation and further advancement of the association's overall safety program
- Created a special section of NYRA Security called the Horse Watch Detail. Members of this group receive additional training to develop expertise on how to properly recognize and monitor the activities of third parties in NYRA barn areas
- Joined the Mid-Atlantic Strategic Plan to Reduce Equine Fatalities Alliance, led by the Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (THA); Dr. Scott Palmer, equine medical director of the state Gaming Commission (NYSGC); and Joe Appelbaum, president of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (NYTHA); and respected veterinarians Dr. Kathleen Anderson and Dr. Reynolds Cowles - both former presidents of the American Association of Equine Practitioners
- Mid-Atlantic Strategic Plan to Reduce Equine Fatalities. The Alliance has unanimously agreed to adopt rules prohibiting the administration of any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication to a horse within 48 hours of a race, and all intra-articular joint injections within 14 days of a race. Additionally, the group formally agreed to a ban on bisphosphonates, (a group of medicines that slow down or prevent bone loss, strengthening bones), on horses younger than four.

NYRA contributed to the development of the strategic plan adopted in the Mid-Atlantic Region by incorporating regional safety best practices and enhanced methods to identify horses at increased risk of injury and outlining protective factors to reduce injuries, which has improved the overall health of racehorses.