

# Animal Welfare Committee – 2011 Minutes

**Meetings:** Thursday, Aug. 04, 2011 --- 1:30-2:30pm  
Friday, Aug. 05, 2011 --- 1:30-2:30pm  
Sunday, Aug. 07, 2011 --- 1:30-2:30pm

**Room:** Holland II

**Committee Secretary:** Tim Manzi

**Chairperson:** Ross Cooper (Australia)

**Committee Members:** Andrew Kelly (Australia), Mick Lombardo (Australia), Patrick De Ryckere (Belgium), John Blakney (Canada), Darryl Kaplan (Canada), Pat Kennedy (Canada), Tammy McNiven (Canada), Klaus Storm (Denmark), Jukka Niskanen (Finland), Guillaume Maupas (France), Gordon Garnett (Great Britain), Francesco Ruffo Scaletta (Italy), Ailsa Smail (New Zealand), Britt Helene Villand Lindheim (Norway), Tove Paule (Norway), Dr. Ekaterina Zabegina (Russia), Peter Forssberg (Sweden), Maria Lejon (Sweden), Christina Olson (Sweden), Ivan Axelrod (USA), Phil Langley (USA), Janet Terhune (USA)

## Agenda Items:

### 1. Election of a chairperson

Ross Cooper was elected as the chairperson.

### 2. Review and approval of the 2009 committee report

The minutes were reviewed and the use of anabolic steroids and “LASIX” was discussed in light of recent developments in each country.

#### **a. Anabolic Steroids**

- **Australia, Italy**- ban on anabolic steroids
- **Great Britain**- if a horse is found to have anabolic steroids, the horse and trainer can be suspended for up to a year.
- **Canada**- plans to completely outlaw anabolic steroids, but the penalty remains to be decided upon in the upcoming year.
- **France**- there is a 12 month suspension if the horse tests positive for anabolic steroids.
- **Scandinavian countries** - give a 24 month ban.

#### **b. LASIX**

- **Australia, New Zealand and European countries**- “LASIX” is a banned substance.
- **Canada**- a “LASIX” program has been in place for a while. It is a strong and strict program in terms of the quantity administered and who administers it. The dose allowed is half of what the USA allows. It is done by third party, no less than four hours out, or the horse is scratched. The horse then remains on “LASIX” for 100 days.
- **Russia**- “LASIX” is not legally imported; therefore it is prohibited on the racetrack.

- **USA**- in a big debate as to whether or not “LASIX” should be usable. Scientific evidence is inconclusive. The climate and training styles of the United States could be a major contributing factor to the number of “bleeders” that exist in the USA.
- If “LASIX” is banned in USA, Canada will probably follow suit.
- Some scientific evidence has shown that “LASIX” might not actually be a useful masking agent anymore, due to the advances in medical technology and the ability to analyze blood and urine samples completely and effectively.
- Some believe that bleeding is a climate issue. Others think that the consistent banning of “LASIX” use in the European countries has led to a significant decline in the number of bleeders, whereas in the USA the “LASIX” has become so widespread that it has become ingrained into a variety of breeding programs, thus perpetuating the “bleeder gene”.
- **Summary: everything seems to be status quo in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The “LASIX” policy is under review in the USA and Canada.**

**c. Other concerns**

- **Great Britain** is concerned with the use of EPO in regards to the best time to test for it, the effects, et cetera.
- **New Zealand** has gone through one significant change in regards to integrity concerns within racing, by establishing an integrity unit of the racing board.

3. Formulation of additional agenda items

- The use of diuretics was added to the agenda, as per the recommendation of the 2009 minutes.

4. International equine health update

**a. Equine Influenza (EI)**

- **Australia**- took 12 months to completely eradicate EI from the country. There is no quarantine procedure for the shipment of horses between New Zealand and Australia, which represents the majority of the imports/exports of horses. From other places, there is a five week long quarantine.
- There is legislation being passed that would grant the horse industry insurance against exotic diseases.
- **France**- before, every horse had to be vaccinated for EI every six months. Now it is not to exceed 12 months, with a minimum set at 6 months for the boosters.

**b. Other Concerns**

- **Australia**- Aside from EI, the “Hendra” virus has become prevalent in Australia over the last decade. This virus comes from fruit bats. The virus is transmitted in the food and water of the horses, which can then pass the virus to humans. So far, there have been 7 human deaths from 11 confirmed cases in horses. Each of the 11 diagnosed horses was destroyed as per the law.
- The first incident of the “Hendra” virus discovered in a dog was found on the same property as an afflicted horse. The horses that are afflicted are immediately destroyed.
- A vaccine has been produced for horses, which is working in trials, but needs more time before it will be introduced. The dog incident is throwing the vaccine back to the drawing board. It was originally to be climate dependent virus but not so anymore.
- An “arbovirus” has become increasingly prevalent in Australia as well. There is an 11% mortality rate in the roughly 2000 confirmed cases of this virus.

- **Russia**- no vaccination for encephalitis. If a horse is imported that has been vaccinated for encephalitis, they are to be quarantined for a minimum six months. This rule has been set in place from Soviet times. Otherwise, many vaccinations are compulsory and dependent on each local area.

#### 5. Current whipping rules, update by country

- **Australia**- On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, a whipping rule was introduced very similar to that of Canada's.
- The reins have to be in both hands at all times. During the last 200 meters, the lines may be crossed but a "flicking" motion is all that can be used.
- The "loose lines" rule is not being interpreted uniformly by stewards which presents a problem.
- **Belgium**- it seems to be changing every year. It is a difficult issue. It is considered to be a work in progress.
- **Canada**- in Ontario, specifically, there is a major change. "One-arm slashing" is eradicated by establishing a rule where a taut rein must be in each hand the entire race.
- They have attempted to stop using the word "whip" in their vernacular, but rather refer to the whip as an urging tool.
- **Denmark**- only allows 5 "urges" with the lines in both hands during the whole race. No arm over shoulder.
- **France**- permits 7 strikes of whip in last 200 meters.
- **Italy**- Stewards always give penalty if drivers are abusive.
- **Great Britain**- one of the first countries to enforce keeping both reins in two hands to avoid the "flogging" of the horse with the whip. However, it seems to be the inconsistencies associated with stewarding that is the biggest issue.
- It was suggested that they have some video footage of acceptable and unacceptable use of the whip on an accessible website.
- The first penalty for breaking proper whipping conduct is to remove the whip from the driver.
- **New Zealand**- their goal is to diminish the use of the whip. Make sure that it is visibly appealing to those that are watching the race. A horse can only be hit 16 times, and not in a consecutive manner.
- **USA**- Generally, it is not considered to be a big issue, especially among the older, more experienced and talented drivers.
- The younger drivers tend to be the ones that abuse the horse with the whip, which is punished in each state.
- Some states have rules regarding one-handed whipping, some states prefer that one holds the lines in two hands at all times, and still others have rules about the number of times one can whip the horse, and at what portion of the track the whipping can be done.
- Welfare groups seem to have backed off from the whipping issue overall.
- ***It was suggested that in about five to ten years the whip will be completely removed from the agenda as it would not be in harness racing.***

#### 6. Injury and accident reporting procedures, by country (How is it conducted? Is a database of information kept?)

- **Australia**- if a vet examines a horse on the race day he/she has to fill out a comprehensive form in triplicate, and enter the form into the database. This is reasonably new. This includes

lacerations and other minor things. The vets have been the biggest advocates of this program so far.

- **Belgium**- the insurance companies are the ones who keep the statistics. No database for injury reports.
- **Canada**- there is an on-track database collection system for injuries. There exists a kind of point system that allows different track veterinarians to communicate better about horses traveling between tracks.
- Ontario has a "Death Registry Program". Any horse that dies before/during/after a race can be subject to a necropsy if the official presiding vet deems it necessary. This has led to a lot of interesting research for the University of Guelph, for example, about injuries to the equine athlete.
- **Denmark**- no registry exists.
- **Finland**- there is a database for the injuries.
- **France, Italy**- only has reports of accidents that occur during a race.
- **Great Britain**- for many years, all horses are inspected prior to the race by stewards and vets if necessary. Any deaths or injuries that result in a "non-finisher" prompt a mandatory inquiry. Vet advice is called upon. The results then go on the website and the database. An injury of any magnitude needs a vet certificate to be able to race again. Serious injuries/accidents, such as when a horse falls, mandate a full steward's inquiry and are subsequently reported.
- **New Zealand**- there is no specific database of all the injuries. Horses are inspected beforehand, just as many of the other countries do.
- **Norway; Sweden**- both have databases for the injuries that are catastrophic in nature. Generally, there is a good system for information. The design is more aimed for track veterinarians to communicate with one another about the horse's history, such as past lameness.
- It is up to the discretion of the presiding vet to check each horse over before they are permitted to race. All decisions are left up to the presiding judge and veterinarian and cannot be overridden by the trainer.
- **Russia**- no database exists. However, there is a rule that not less than one hour before the start of a race the vet has to write an official letter if any accident occurs or if any lameness is noticed and if the horse had any medicine beforehand. Any accident during the start of the race is dependent upon the state rules. There is a special tent at every equine sports complex to hide any horses from the public for vets to administer medications in addition to an ambulance.
- **USA**- most of the states keep track of accidents individually. The state vets are the ones who do so, by recording when horses on the track break a bone or are considered to have sustained severe injuries.
- Many trainers will scratch a horse that may be injured by saying the horse is sick to avoid having to re-qualify the horse to race again.

## 7. Are twisted wire bits and/or crib rings banned in any jurisdiction?

- A twisted wire bit can typically be used on a "puller" and a crib ring can be used on a horse to stop the horse from "windsucking". Both can be considered inhumane.
- Most of the jurisdictions have not come across either of these, and thus have not been approved.
- **Australia**- one state has banned the use of a twisted-wire bit. In training, it has been found that a pulling net is very successful as a replacement to the twisted-wire bit. However, it is against rules to have any sort of equipment over the horse's nose.

8. Pulling nets; are they used in any country and if yes how are photo finish issues overcome?
- **Australia**- there has been a rule drafted that would require the steward's permission to use a specific pulling net.
  - **Sweden**- has the pulling nets regulated but they are not seen often. If you use it you must have permission from the judge.
  - If it does not harm the horse or with the photo finish then it is OK for use.
  - It is in UET regulations to not use any equipment that could harm the horse.
  - All the track vets that can inspect the horse before a race and decide for themselves. It is not possible to regulate everything that shows up.
9. Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM); do any countries other than **Australia** require fillies to undergo clitoral sinus and endometrium (deep cervix) swabs as part of quarantine clearance?
- CEM is a problem in regards to the importation of juvenile fillies into **Australia**. The test for CEM will render the filly infertile. It is very invasive test that is required as part of the quarantine. It appears quite clear that this is a test that should be undertaken. It has become a big problem for those wishing to import broodmares into AUS.
  - **Canada**- must be a test on each collection of semen from stallion, such as when importing semen from the USA. Must go to the state vet to sign a piece of paper for each collection, and it is very cost inhibitive.
  - **France**- CEM testing is solely done on breeding farms.
  - **Russia**- every import has to be CEM tested.
  - **All other countries do not require this sort of testing.**
10. Asian screening limits; do the various countries or jurisdictions support the concept?
- It could be a big mistake if each federation published and fixed the limits of each non-endogenous/endogenous substance for testing.
  - We are not able to justify how these limits have been fixed.
  - It seems contradictory that we strive for a "zero-tolerance policy" and then we publish the maximum amount of foreign substances one can put in their racehorse without getting a positive.
  - Endogenous substances need a threshold amount, and all other foreign substances, if present, should result in a positive.
  - Natural substances in the horse can potentially be published, but not other limits.
  - Trainers and veterinarians could begin to abuse the system.
  - Identifying thresholds and giving more information to trainers can become a regulatory nightmare with unsolvable cases.
  - The "positive or negative" call needs to be left up to the technicians in the labs, not up to the federations.
  - **Summary: A substance natural to the horse needs to have a threshold value. Non-natural substances are cause for a positive if present in the horse's system.**

**Attached: Asian Screening Limits proposal**

11. Comments regarding presentations made at this conference

- There seemed to be significant disparity between the effectiveness of the testing policies present in the **USA** as per the presentations regarding integrity and testing given today.
- Clearly the eventual goal is a clean sport. However, inherent differences present between different nations are nearly impossible to overcome, specifically the obstacles the **USA** needs to overcome to regulate testing policies.
- Although it appears the rules regarding testing in the **USA** are different from state to state, it is more a problem with the efficiency of the different labs available to each and every state that holds racing.
- Certainly horses that need some sort of medication when training should be given access to that medication, but the problem arises when this medication interferes in racing.
- ***It might be in our best interest to standardize the medication rules internationally, including testing procedures and lab accreditation. Additionally, we need to develop the intelligence on the new threats to the integrity of our sport.***
- The jury is still out as to how effective each lab may be at identifying "LASIX" present in a horse's system, whether it is being used as a masking agent, or whether the medication is simply being abused. We need to make sure that our horses are being respected and not abused.
- Breeding is the most important part of our industry. Our industry's perseverance relies on the breeding of the best mares and stallions together to further the quality of horses being produced.
- Although the idea that all labs need to be accredited to an international standard is important in theory, **Great Britain** has experienced problems regarding the competency of all accredited labs in Europe. Not all accredited labs are created equally.
- The UET has recently established animal welfare guidelines for harness racing.
- ***We need to strive towards making sure the welfare of the horses involved in the sport is of paramount importance when we discuss issues of medication and testing.***

12. Any other matters.

- There were no other matters from the floor.

**ATTACHED**

- Proposed International Racing Intelligence and Information System (IRIIS)
- Asian Screening Limits: A Compromise from Scientifically Decided European Screening Limits

## Asian Screening Limits

### *These screening limits are a compromise from scientifically decided European Screening Limits*

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Asia has decided to publish the screening limits for certain therapeutic substances which are used in the dope test of the stewards of the Racing Authorities. These screening limits are essentially a technical limit established by the laboratories and represent the international references to declare a positive test.

It is understood that the screening limits, after having been decided by the Racing Authorities on the proposition of the laboratories, have to be under the responsibility of the laboratories and are not to be published.

Nevertheless, the Animal Welfare Committee thinks that it is important:

- to publish thresholds for endogenous substances and some of feed origin and
- to publish recommended detection times (period of time when a horse is not allowed to race after a treatment with specific substances) for the information of trainers and veterinarians. A safety margin should also be added, to which the trainer and attending veterinarian are responsible for abiding by.

Finally, in case of a contest in court, only the laboratories have the ability to justify, as scientists, their methods.