



CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD

PRESS RELEASE

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SUMMARY OF CHRB ACTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS 11-21-24

The California Horse Racing Board conducted a meeting on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at Cal Expo. Chairman Gregory Ferraro chaired the meeting, joined by Vice Chair Oscar Gonzales and Commissioners Dennis Alfieri, Brenda Washington Davis, and Thomas Hudnut.

The audio of this entire Board meeting is available on the CHRB Website (www.chrb.ca.gov) under the [Webcast](#) link, accessed through the Media Room tab. In brief:

- While the Board considered the license application for the upcoming winter-spring meet at Santa Anita, track executive Aiden Butler took the opportunity to address a much larger issue. In essence, he said racing in California is heading toward disaster if Santa Anita and northern thoroughbred interests continue to compete with overlapping race meets.

Both Santa Anita and Golden State Racing (GSR) at Pleasanton are cutting purses due largely to small fields and reduced handle. He described this as “suicide.” His solution, though not clearly spelled out in great detail, essentially calls for horses to continue training in the north but race in the south. He said the five fair meets should continue running from June to September. He did not rule out GSR conducting a meet sometime during the year, but his clear message was that GSR dates should be limited, so there would be less overlap with thoroughbred racing in the south.

Butler said the entire industry should pay for stabling the horses in the north and shuttling them back and forth to the south for racing. He pledged to offer specific races for horses from the north, perhaps on

stand-alone racing cards. He urged the CHRB to arrange for all interests to meet to discuss this matter – and very soon.

No vote was taken by the Board, as this matter was off topic from the publicized agenda, but the commissioners expressed their personal interest in continuing this discussion. And Larry Swartzlander, executive director of the California Authority of Fairs, seemed cooperative when he pointed out that GSR purse generation has been disappointing. He welcomed discussions with southern interests.

Returning to the agenda, the Board approved the license for the Los Angeles Turf Club to operate a thoroughbred meet at Santa Anita that will offer racing from December 26, 2024, through June 15, 2025.

- When the Board moved on to discuss license applications for both a daytime thoroughbred meet and year-long quarter horse meet at Los Alamitos, the discussion rapidly centered on an unacceptable number of equine fatalities at the Orange County track.

While the CHRB is concerned about all horse fatalities, its principal focus is on musculoskeletal injuries that are considered preventable, generally sustained while racing or training. Los Alamitos recorded 11 musculoskeletal fatalities in all of 2023. That number has increased to 15 so far this year. Moreover, 10 of those musculoskeletal fatalities in 2024 were concentrated in the last five months.

“Your injury rate in the last few months has been excessive,” began Chairman Ferraro. “It will not be allowed to continue next year. You are going to have to get hold of your vets and trainers and put the fear of God into them, or do whatever you have to do, but we just can’t tolerate that.”

Focusing on the long quarter-horse meet, Dr. Ferraro continued, “As chairman of this Board I can tell you for sure that if the injury rate continues at the level it’s at now, I will call an emergency meeting of this Board to shut you down.”

Los Alamitos owner Ed Allred already has taken steps to improve the situation. He asked Dr. Rick Arthur, former equine medical director for the CHRB, to meet with veterinarians and trainers to come up with remedies. Dr. Arthur told the Board that those meetings have resulted in new policies at Los Alamitos concerning veterinary treatments, and Allred will personally be subsidizing the cost to horsemen for advanced diagnostic imaging on their horses.

The Board approved both licenses for Los Alamitos. The daytime thoroughbred meet will run from December 6 through December 15. The night quarter-horse meet will run from December 28, 2024, through December 21, 2025.

- Hanna Schein, vice president of investigations for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, gave a lengthy, well-documented presentation on unsanctioned horse racing that included social media posts and video of individuals licensed by the CHRB who continue to participate in horse-racing matches at locations in California. She said CHRB Rule 1902, which prohibits licensees from participating in or even attending non-recognized race meets, is not being properly enforced. She cited one individual who was charged with violating Rule 1902, but the stewards ruled there was insufficient evidence to proceed.

This rankled several Board members, particularly Vice Chair Gonzales, who said, “Sounds like we have some work to do with our stewards, to be quite honest. The stewards need to understand what the intent was (of Rule 1902), not their loose interpretation. We owe an apology to the public. I believe we should do everything in our power to rectify this. You have my personal commitment that when this kind of overwhelming evidence is shared, that we will take corrective action.”

- The Board completed its 2025 date allocations for Southern California by allocating three weeks for simulcasting-only between racing meets. These simulcasting weeks provide revenue to the host tracks. Two of the three weeks were allocated to Santa Anita and the third to Del Mar.
- The Board approved the license application for Watch and Wager LLC to host a harness meet at Cal Expo from December 13, 2024, through May 2, 2025. General Manager Chris Schick said new fees levied by the CHRB for the costs of stewards and official veterinarians have forced Watch and Wager to reduce costs, and the solution they decided on, with agreement by horsemen, is to reduce their operating days by seven, from 46 programs last year to 39. He said this will mean there will not be any reductions in purses and the stakes program will remain intact.
- The Board approved license renewals for seven companies providing platforms for Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW): TVG, Xpressbet, Twinspires, Watch and Wager, Lien Games, NYRAbets, and Game Play Network.

- The Board authorized the Los Angeles Turf Club to distribute \$11,345 in race day charity proceeds to 10 beneficiaries.
- The Board authorized the Pacific Racing Association to distribute \$79,219 in race day charity proceeds to eight beneficiaries.
- Deputy Executive Director Cynthia Alameda reported on a productive and well-attended conference for Women in Racing that was held at Santa Anita.

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