



Minutes
Oregon Racing Commission
September 21, 2017

Meeting Detail

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met on Thursday, September 21, 2017, in Room 1C of the Portland State Office Building (PSOB), 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland, OR.

Call to Order

Chair Charles Williamson called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

In Attendance

Commissioners: Chair Charles Williamson; Vice Chair Jan Palmer, DVM; Commissioner Diego Conde; Commissioner Christopher Dudley (by phone); Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM (by phone).

Staff

Executive Director Jack McGrail

Agenda Items

Approvals:

Action: Approval of the meeting agenda.

Moved by: Commissioner Diego Conde

Seconded: Vice Chair Jan Palmer, DVM

Vote: Commissioners Williamson, Palmer, Conde, Dudley and Huber voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (5:0).

Action: Approval of the August 17, 2017, meeting minutes.

Moved by: Commissioner Christopher Dudley

Seconded: Commissioner Diego Conde

Vote: Commissioners Williamson, Palmer, Conde, Dudley and Huber voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (5:0).

Old Business:

Medication and Horse Welfare Sub-committee Report

Commissioner Conde reported that the sub-committee met this morning and discussed three topics: consecutive-day racing; breakdown data; and a recap of the summer meets. Regarding consecutive-day racing, he stated that the committee discussed both medication compliance and horse welfare issues. A small sample of data from 2016 and 2017 revealed no significant effect on horse welfare when horses race on back-to-back days, he reported.

He stated that the sub-committee decided to reinforce the following policies: All horses racing on a second consecutive day will be checked pre-race by the state veterinarian. All horses racing on a second consecutive day will be tested, whether they win or not. The Commission will compile a list of rules

regarding medication administration and levels and post it near the racing office to increase stakeholder awareness. The sub-committee will continue to collect and analyze data.

Regarding breakdown data that has been collected, Commissioner Conde stated that the sub-committee asked Commissioner Huber to come up with a cost estimate for analyzing that information and bring a proposal for analysis to the Commission.

Commissioner Conde also reported that the fair meets saw no catastrophic injuries this summer.

In response to a question from Chair Williamson, Executive Director McGrail noted the four policies the sub-committee highlighted already fall within the Commission's jurisdiction and do not require additional approval.

Executive Director's report

Executive Director McGrail reported that the Harney County Fair meet was much improved over last year, demonstrating the county's commitment to racing. He noted that Commission representatives met each morning with Race Director Don Slone and the horsemen to address issues that arose the previous day. The track and its crossing were well policed, as were dogs in the infield. The track was in great shape thanks to the work of trackman Steve Wood and fair volunteer Fred Robertson and his crew, Director McGrail noted. The meet's 22 races and 118 starters represented a significant increase over last year, he stated, with an average field size of 5.36 (compared to four last year). According to the stall man, 110 horses were stabled on the grounds, compared to last year's 80. Handle was up: \$19,500 for 2017, compared to \$15,000 last year.

Director McGrail noted the meet had enough jockeys, with eight staying for the duration, and thanked Randy Evers of the Oregon Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association (OHBPA) for traveling to Emerald Downs to recruit jockeys. Apprentice jockey Elver Vargas came to the meet as a result and chalked up his first win. The Jockey Incentive Fund totaled \$4,000 – including \$1,000 from Harney County -- and each jockey who rode three days received a \$500 bonus.

The meet leased the starting gate from the Crooked River Roundup. One stall opened with a slight delay on the second-to-last race of the meet, but it is believed that was caused by the horse in the next stall and was not a gate issue, Director McGrail reported.

No horses suffered catastrophic injuries during this summer's fair meets, Director McGrail stated. That is partly due to luck, but he also credited attention paid to pre-race vet exams, track surface, maintenance and gates, as well as jockeys riding safely and horsemen racing sound horses.

Director McGrail noted that the Portland Meadows meet begins Oct. 2.

He reported that Tim Davis will join the Investigative/Licensing department through a "developmental work opportunity." Mr. Davis will help increase the department's backside presence.

Director McGrail noted that the Oregon Fairs Association racing committee meeting is 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 28, in the Comfort Suites Hotel next to the Linn County Fairgrounds. He will be there, as will one or both of the Commission stewards.

Future of Racing in Oregon Group (FROG) Report

Vice Chair Palmer stated that the group met this morning. Besides topics already covered, the group discussed backside improvements. Ditch cleaning and stall leveling continue, and a few other backside improvements were suggested.

New Business:

Fair Director's Report - Eastern Oregon Livestock Show:

Nate Jacob, Co-Director of Racing and Mutuel Manager, offered a recap of the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show (EOLS): The meet held 23 races over three days, with handle totaling \$40,929, down \$496 from last year. The meet drew 131 starters, three fewer than last year. Mr. Jacob noted that there were too many five- and six-horse fields, which came as a surprise because purses were the best they've been, thanks to contributions from horse industry groups. Eight jockeys rode, including two new to EOLS. He noted that was a sufficient number for seven-horse fields, but did not leave much room for error if a jockey got hurt.

Purses totaled \$67,420, up from \$58,900 last year. One race Sunday carried a \$5,000-plus purse, which Mr. Jacob stated was the highest he's seen at the meet. Hub funds from the ORC contributed \$46,000 to purses, as well as \$2,100 in matching funds, OHBPA contributed \$9,500; Oregon Quarter Horse Racing Association (OQHRA) and Oregon Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association (OTOBA) each added \$3,500, EOLS added \$1,220 and others in the community contributed \$1,600.

Mr. Jacob noted that volunteers from Eastern Oregon University in La Grande help with clean-up and repairs before the show in exchange for college credit. He added that the show supports more than 600 4-H and FFA youth, which in turn generates a lot of local support.

One horse stumbled and threw a jockey, Mr. Jacob reported, but both horse and rider were OK. He added that trackman Steve Wood offered advice on grading the track, which was in excellent shape until a heavy rain resulted in a big mud hole. The track was reworked and races proceeded without incident.

Mr. Jacob noted that the Commission's policy of allowing the meet to disburse jockey incentive funds was a help. EOLS gives money to jockeys for showing up, for each day they race, and whatever is left at the end of the meet is divided among all jockeys. He stated this provides more incentive for jockeys to attend each meet than the previous system, in which the fund was divided up at the end of the summer circuit.

In response to a question from the Commission, Mr. Jacob stated that United Tote, which was new to EOLS this year, worked well.

He added that EOLS added bars between stalls in the starting gate based on the recommendation of the consultant hired by the Commission. However, assistant starters thought the rails were too high, so EOLS plans to modify them for next year.

Mr. Jacob also recounted the story of the July 24 fire at the EOLS grounds. He reported that three boys playing with matches started a fire that burned down three wooden barns. The loss totaled 72 stalls, including four in the racing test barn, as well as a goat barn.

EOLS plans to rebuild using event modular, 24-stall horse barns, and will end up with about the same number of stalls, he stated. Work will begin in October and be finished in time for the June show.

Mr. Jacob stated the three barns were insured for replacement value of \$63,000 each. The event modular-stall barns will cost slightly less than that, he added.

Mr. Jacob reported that the starting gate was about 50 feet from the fire, and all the padding melted and will need to be replaced. The gate was not insured, he noted, and EOLS is requesting help from the ORC both for gate repair and to bring power and water to the test barn.

Chair Williamson stated that funding request would be referred to the Budget Sub-committee.

Fair Director's Report – Tillamook County Fair:

Don Averill, Director of Racing, noted that prior to the meet, he noticed rust on the starting gate. Instead of opting for a quick fix, he took the gate apart, installed new rods, painted and rebuilt it, and the gate performed without a hitch.

He thanked the OHBPA for providing funds to make it possible for horses to come to the track after the Crooked River Roundup (CRRU) and stay after the conclusion of Tillamook's meet. He reported that about 90 horses came in after CRRU. He added that having enough room for the trailers, pickups and cars that accompany those horses is problematic for fair personnel.

The four-day race meet saw a total of 213 starters in 33 races, with six- and seven-horse fields, except on Friday, which saw several five-horse races, he reported. Ten jockeys attended, eight riding every day. Mr. Averill credited the Jockey Incentive with drawing riders, noting that the fair put an additional \$2,500 in the pot – not to mention contributing cheese. (The fair gave out 460 blocks of Tillamook cheese at the race meet, he added.) One rider fell, but was not seriously injured.

Purse money totaled \$108,400, with \$16,000 of that from OHBPA, \$6,500 from OTOBA; \$1,000 from OQHRA, and \$10,700 from Tillamook friends, family and business sponsors, he stated. The meet changed its betting from \$3 to \$2.

Handle totaled \$160,000, Mr. Averill reported, which was an 11 percent increase over last year. He summed up that the fair had a great race meet, thanks to countless volunteer hours, as well as the support of the ORC and the industry groups.

Vice Chair Palmer asked what accounted for the lower number of starters on Friday. Mr. Averill replied that he thought a lot of horses took Friday off, running instead on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. He noted that attracting more Quarter Horses would help, but the meet does not move the starting gate, as there is only 24 minutes between races, so more Quarter Horse races would require a second gate, which is not in the cards.

Other Business as May Properly Come Before the Commission:

None

Public Comment:

None

Contested Cases:

None

Confirmation of the Next Commission Meeting:

The next Oregon Racing Commission meeting will be Thursday, October 19, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. in Room 1D of the Portland State Office Building (PSOB), 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland, OR. Vice Chair Palmer noted there will be no FROG meeting that day.

Adjournment:

Action: Motion to adjourn.

Moved by: Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM

Seconded: Commissioner Diego Conde

Vote: Commissioners Williamson, Palmer, Conde, Dudley and Huber voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (5:0).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.