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## **EQUINE MEDICAL DIRECTOR ADVISORY - NSAID ANTI-STACKING RULE**

On January 22, 2018 the Commission adopted anti-stacking time restrictions for the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (“NSAIDs”) before horse races that will take effect on February 7, 2018. These amendments to Rules 4043.2(e)(14) and 4120.2(e)(14) will permit no more than two NSAIDs, chosen from the listed permissible NSAIDs, to be used during the week before racing. One can be used until 48 hours before racing, the other can be used only until 96 hours before the race.

The intent of this rulemaking is to prevent concurrent and otherwise excessive administrations of NSAIDs, such as Phenylbutazone and Banamine, which reduce pain by inhibiting the inflammatory process. While NSAIDs can improve healing and recovery from injury, they can also inhibit the effects of the natural healing process, including swelling and associated pain that would prevent a horse from sustaining further injury. In addition, the administration of multiple NSAIDs close to racing might be efficacious during a race while appearing to comply with the previous time restrictions that allowed all listed NSAIDs to be used until 48 hours before racing. This practice, commonly known as “stacking,” represents a serious threat to equine health and welfare. Numerous studies have shown that using two or more NSAIDs at the same time puts the horse at increased risk of complications, including colic, protein loss, diarrhea, gastric ulcers, colitis and kidney damage. Although the use of NSAIDs is common at the racetrack, NSAIDs should always be used with caution. Some horses are much more sensitive to complications related to NSAID use than others. Check with your veterinarian to determine if any of the horses in your stable might be pre-disposed to complications related to NSAID administration. If any of the above complications are seen in your horses that are being treated with NSAIDs, seek veterinary assistance immediately. While some complications such as gastric ulceration are performance limiting, others, particularly diarrhea related to right dorsal colitis, can be life-threatening. Additionally, regular administration of NSAIDs to horses in active race training can mask the clinical signs of musculoskeletal injury, making it difficult for trainers to accurately assess the soundness of their horses during and following exercise.

This rule also includes a rule amendment to delete meclufenamic acid (formerly marketed as Arquel) as an NSAID permitted to be administered within one week of racing. This substance is no longer marketed by any pharmaceutical company. There is no veterinary necessity for its use within one week of racing. The new rule also adds diclofenac to the list of permissible NSAIDs.