

Announcement Concerning Enforcement of HISA Rule 2276 (HORSESHOES) as It Pertains to Full Outer Rim Shoes and Toe Grabs

July 29, 2022

Rule 2276 shall not be enforced for horses **racing on dirt surfaces** that are shod on the **hindlimbs** with traction devices in the form of **either a full outer rim shoe (up to 4 mm in height) or a toe grab (up to 4 mm in height)**. All other provisions of Rule 2276 shall remain in full force and effect. Enforcement of Rule 2276 will begin as previously announced on Monday, August 1, 2022.

RATIONALE

In the last week, the Racetrack Safety Committee (“the Committee”) was made aware through communications from elected officials on Capitol Hill and from horsepersons of widespread concerns that the traction provided by full outer rim shoes and toe grabs for the hindlimbs is essential for the safety of horses in certain circumstances. These circumstances include breaking from the gate and track conditions that are impacted by ambient temperature or precipitation (including maintenance procedures such as watering the track). The concerns are that reduced traction will result in horses either slipping, falling, or otherwise being unable to firmly grip the track surface, with resulting injury to horses and their riders. In response to these concerns, the Committee invited a representative group of horsepersons including trainers, owners, a veterinarian, and a blacksmith to present their concerns to the Committee. Following this meeting, the Committee met for several hours to discuss the concerns expressed in light of the upcoming implementation of the horseshoe rule.

After full consideration of the matter, the Committee ***strongly recommended the use of full outer rim shoes for hindlimb traction*** because these shoes provide traction while enabling the hoof to land flatly on the track surface, whereas toe grabs accentuate stressors on bone and soft tissues, such as tendons and ligaments, which contributes to injury. Moreover, the only study investigating the association of hindlimb toe grabs with injury revealed that injuries to the suspensory apparatus were more likely to occur to horses shod with hindlimb toe grabs.¹ In contrast, there is no evidence indicating that toe grabs protect horses or riders. However, given the concerns expressed, the Committee recommended to HISA that Rule 2276 shall not be enforced for horses **racing on dirt surfaces** that are shod on the **hindlimbs** with traction devices in the form of either **a full outer rim shoe (up to 4 mm in height) or a toe grab (up to 4 mm in height)**. All other provisions of Rule 2276 shall remain in full force and effect. Enforcement of Rule 2276 will begin as previously announced on Monday, August 1, 2022.

EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS SUPPORTING THIS RECOMMENDATION

Findings that support the rationale for strongly recommending use of full outer rim shoes rather than toe grabs are the epidemiological data¹, consistency of the association of musculoskeletal injury with toe grabs on the hindlimbs with that of injury on the forelimbs¹⁻⁴, findings of the association of a long-toe conformation with racing injury (toe grabs would extend the effective length of the toe)⁵, expert opinion⁶, and evidence from other racing jurisdictions where toe grabs are banned and where injury rates are lower (including Japan, where racing on a dirt surface is prominent).

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