

California Amends Rule to Void Claims Again

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A claim made on a horse running in California will be voided by stewards if the animal is placed on the official veterinarian's list as lame or unsound following the race, under a rule adopted by the state's horse racing board Feb. 21.

On a unanimous 6-0 vote, the California Horse Racing Board, meeting at [Santa Anita Park](#), gave final approval to the proposed rule change on claiming races. The rule has already undergone a 45-day public comment period after initial passage in September and will take effect later this year pending approval by the state office of administrative law.

Since 2011, the board has been trying to find a way to prevent trainers that could be seeking to dump unwanted or unsound horses on unsuspecting buyers in lower level claiming races. Trying to protect horses in such circumstances as well as their jockeys, the board initially passed a rule that voided a claim if an injured horse died during a race or before being removed from the track.

Two incidents in which horses were vanned off in dire condition after suffering injuries and later euthanized in the barn area, one at [Del Mar](#) and one at [Betfair Hollywood Park](#), demonstrated the inadequacy of the rule. This latest amendment replaces that change.

"This is the rule that the stewards are comfortable with, the one veterinarians are comfortably with," said commissioner Bo Derek, who chairs the CHRB's medication and track safety committee. "I think it's essential to the future of racing. The claim will be voided if a horse is put on the vet's list after the race."

"The objective is to try to protect the integrity of racing and protect the jockeys," added commissioner Chuck Winner, a member of the committee. "No rule is going to be perfect. I do believe we have gone around and around on this and there are always going to be problems, its never going to be perfect no matter what we do. But this the best solution we can come up with."

Barry Broad, an attorney representing the Jockeys' Guild, said the organization is strongly in favor of the rule change.

Dr. Rick Arthur, the board's equine medical director, said that a horse that is claimed will be taken to the receiving barn after the race, where it would receive an inspection from the racing vet or state vet. A horse would be placed on the vet's list only if found to be lame or unsound. The rule would not apply to a horse that is vanned off the track for other reasons, such as heat exhaustion or bleeding from the lungs, Arthur said.

"We (official vets) make this same decision about whether a horse goes on the vet's list every day," said Arthur, who supported the rule change. "It's their job."

Arthur told the board that since the beginning of 2009, 96 Thoroughbreds that were claimed in California wound up on the vet's list. Thirteen were euthanized as a result of severe injuries and most of the others either never returned to racing or were out of action for an extended period of time.