



# The Inside Track

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## 5 Things We Learned at the Mid-Atlantic Regulators Meeting

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by Frank Vespe, [www.theracingbiz.com](http://www.theracingbiz.com)

More than 100 people came out to Tuesday's "Mid-Atlantic Regulatory and Stakeholders Meeting" at the White Clay Creek Country Club on the grounds of Delaware Park: racing Commissioners and their staff, horsemen, racetrack operators, and even a lone media member. Who let that guy — me — in anyway?

It was a packed, all-day agenda. Here are five things we learned:

### **IT'S PRETTY RARE FOR A HORSE TO COME BACK WITH A POSITIVE DRUG TEST, AT LEAST IN THE MID-ATLANTIC.**

States in the region (including New York) spent \$9.6 million on drug tests, according to meeting organizer Alan Foreman's presentation. They tested just shy of 50,000 samples — at an average cost of about \$200 per horse — and came back with 236 positives. That's a positive rate of not quite 5-per-1,000 — less than one-half of one percent. Of those, according to Foreman's stats, more than half were for Class 4 or Class 5 drugs — the least serious kind.

Those stats led Foreman to wonder if the industry is "devoting too much of our dollars" to catching minor violations, rather than focusing on the ever-evolving world of new performance-enhancing drugs. One vet agreed, suggesting, "We're catching people that don't need to be caught." And Dr. George Maylin, underlining the importance of ongoing research, likened finding unknown drugs to locating "a needle in a haystack."

### **SOME FOLKS BELIEVE THAT HORSE RACING SHOULD ADOPT ONE PRACTICE COMMON IN HUMAN SPORTS, THAT OF THE "THERAPEUTIC USE EXEMPTION."**

A therapeutic use exemption allows an athlete to take an otherwise prohibited medication if it is to treat an illness or condition.

But Ed Martin, of the Association of Racing Commissioners International, warned that such a move "would be a sea change" in the sport's regulatory scheme. What's more, it could open the industry up to additional suspicion and scrutiny.

*The Delaware Park meet starts on Saturday, June 3rd and concludes on Saturday, October 21st.*

*In races with 7 or more starters, all horses are guaranteed to earn at least \$500.*

*Contact the racing office with any questions.  
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[www.delawarepark.com](http://www.delawarepark.com)

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## Mid-Atlantic Regulators Meeting cont.

**THE RATE OF EQUINE FATALITIES HAS DECLINED, SOMEWHAT SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LAST COUPLE YEARS, FROM 1.9 PER 1,000 STARTERS IN 2013 TO 1.54 PER 1,000 STARTERS IN 2016.**

In the mid-Atlantic, the rate of fatalities has declined from about 2.4 per 1,000 starts in 2010 to around 1.4 last year, Dr. Scott Palmer said; it's the first year that the rate regionally was below the national rate.

Why? That's the key question everyone would like to answer. But Dr. Tim Parkin suggested that, while some factors are known, others simply are not.

In 2016, for example, the number of races run on "off dirt" — that is, dirt tracks that were not rated fast — declined, presumably as a result of fewer days of precipitation. That accounted, Parkin said, for 6.5 percent of the drop in fatal breakdowns. But analysts have not been able to tease out the reasons behind 65 percent of the reduction, leaving a lot of questions as yet unanswered.

Some of the data raise interesting policy questions. For example, Parkin said that a horse's first race after a trainer switch is "its highest-risk race." How should the industry deal with that?

### **UNIFORMITY ISN'T ALWAYS UNIFORM.**

The mid-Atlantic region has made a great deal of progress in harmonizing medication rules from state to state in recent years; in fact, the **Racing Medication and Testing Consortium lists all six** of the region's states — Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia — as having adopted all of the tenets of the national uniform medication program. Those are: a list of controlled therapeutic substances, with all others prohibited; the use of accredited laboratories for drug testing; third-party Lasix administration; and a multiple medication violation point system.

But some horsemen say that uniformity doesn't always seem to be uniform, and that changes in testing levels from state to state — or within a state — can lead to varying results. Pennsylvania, for example, recorded 92 of the 236 medication positives in the region, which one horsemen attributed to the state's testing changing to "a much more sensitive apparatus."

As reported by *The Racing Biz*, **Maryland in June upgraded its testing** to "graded stakes" quality testing, which entails testing for a broader spectrum of drugs. Some of the states in the region follow similar protocol, while others do not.

"How are we supposed to keep up on that?" one horseman wondered.

### **FOLKS HOPING FOR NATIONAL LEGISLATION TO CENTRALIZE MEDICATION RULES AND ENFORCEMENT IN A SINGLE NATIONAL BODY PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HOLD THEIR BREATH.**

Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL), a horse owner and grandson of Pittsburgh Steelers founder Art Rooney, addressed the group at lunch. Rooney said that he had a hard time envisioning a scenario where the Congress would

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## Equine Fatalities Decline at Delaware Park

From [www.theracingbiz.com](http://www.theracingbiz.com)

In March, the Jockey Club released a six-year summary of fatality statistics from the Equine Injury Database (EID), which covered through 2014. The report also contained a comparison between 2013 and 2014.

The database, which was launched by the Jockey Club in 2008, sought to identify “the frequency, types and outcome of racing injuries using a standardized format that generates valid statistics, identify markers for horses at increased risk of injury and serves as a data source for research directed at improving safety and preventing injuries.” While the majority of racetracks in the country participate and submit information to the Jockey Club, not all choose to make the information public.

Last week, Linda Dougherty for *The Racing Biz* examined the injury statistics that were available for the mid-Atlantic racetracks, in particular, those of Delaware Park, Pimlico, and Laurel Park.

In her most recent column, Dougherty takes a closer look at Delaware Park, a track that reported 1.54 fatalities per 1,000 starts, the lowest figure reported since the EID began collecting data in 2009, and what factors led to such a reduction.

There were several different factors that played a part in the decline, but two in particular – track maintenance and a “change in the medication culture” – were instrumental.

“Trainers are being a lot more cautious about therapeutic medication,” said John Mooney, the executive director of racing at Delaware Park. “We’ve always done our best to maintain the track surfaces. We also perform three exams on the horses every racing day – in the morning, in the paddock, and at the starting gate – and the veterinarians are doing a terrific job. All of this has helped.”

“It was a team effort,” said John Wayne, executive director of the Delaware Thoroughbred Racing Commission.

“The racing surface improved. We have the backing of the Rickman family, who are very interested in protecting the image of the track. And a major contributing factor was the claiming rule. It sent a message: Don’t put your horse in if it’s not 100 percent.”

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*In 2014, Delaware Park reported 1.54 fatalities per 1,000 starts, the lowest figure reported since data collecting began in 2009.*

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## 2017 Stakes Schedule

### DELAWARE PARK Stanton, Delaware

July 29 - Delaware Park Arabian Derby (Gr.2), 3- and 4-year-olds, \$30,000 guaranteed, 1 ¼ miles.

August 5 - Delaware Park Arabian Oaks (Gr.2), 3- and 4-year-old fillies, \$30,000 guaranteed, 1 1/16 miles. Sponsored by Cre Run Enterprises LLC.

August 19 - Delaware Park Arabian Classic H. (Gr.1), 3-year-olds and up, with preference given to 4-year-olds and up. \$50,000 guaranteed, 1 ¼ miles.

September 2 - Buzz Brauning Arabain Distaff H. (Gr.1), 3-year-olds and up, with preference given to 4-year-olds and up, fillies and mares, \$45,000 guaranteed, 1 1/8 miles. Following the race will be a social event hosted by EARA at the White Clay Creek Country Club. More details will be announced closer to the time.

September 23 - Delaware Park Arabian Juvenile Filly Championship (Gr.3), 3-year-old fillies, \$20,000 guaranteed, 1 mile and 70 yards.

September 30 - Delaware Park Arabian Juvenile Championship (Gr.3), 3-year-old colts and geldings, \$20,000 guaranteed, 1 mile and 70 yards

### MONMOUTH PARK Monmouth, New Jersey

September 4 - HH Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Cup H. (Gr.1) (Diamond Jewel, 3rd leg of the Triple Jewel) 4-year-olds and up, \$50,000 guaranteed, 1 mile. There will likely be a social event or area set up for guests of the Sheikh Mansoor Festival. Complete details to be released at a later time.

## Mid-Atlantic Regulators Meeting continued.

take action on racing rules, even were the industry united behind such a change. Rooney has been vocal about his frustration with his party's recent failure to reform health care, telling *The Atlantic* that he was "wracking my brain to think of one thing our party has done that's been something positive." If Republicans couldn't come together on an issue on which virtually all of them had run, he suggested, it's not likely — and possibly not desirable — that the Congress would unite to force a national solution on a reluctant racing industry.

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