



PHHA
PENNSYLVANIA HARNESS
Horsemen's Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Racehorse Drug Testing Gets A Boost From Multiple Donations To Penn Vet's New Bolton Center

Three prominent horsemen's organizations have provided over \$700,000 in equipment and supplies for research that is already well underway.

[June 18, 2013; Kennett Square, PA] – Advanced equipment and supplies recently donated by leading horsemen's organizations have given the New Bolton Center at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine a powerful forensic research tool for the development of innovative racehorse drug testing protocols.

The Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association (PHHA), a trade group that represents industry participants at eastern Pennsylvania's harness racing tracks, donated approximately \$470,000 to purchase a mass spectrometer. This state-of-the-art equipment is highly sensitive, allowing staffers to research protein-based drugs and peptides, and develop methods to better detect, identify and characterize medications that can enhance performance and/or cause potential harm to the health, welfare and safety of equine athletes. It is capable of analyzing changes in proteins that may be related to the administration of drugs and shock wave therapy.

"Plain and simple, we want a clean sport," said Sam Beegle, president of the PHHA. "This grant is part of our ongoing investments to ensure a level playing field, and keep horses healthy and safe."

In addition, two other prominent horsemen's organizations will provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in software, supplies and accessories for the research project. The Meadows Standardbred Owners Association (MSOA), which represents horsemen at The Meadows Racetrack & Casino near Pittsburgh, and the Pennsylvania Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, which provides services for horsemen at both Penn National in Grantville and Presque Isle Downs in Erie, have so far contributed over \$250,000 for the same goal.

New Bolton Center's Dr. Lawrence Soma said that while instances of positive drug tests are relatively low, the forensic laboratory can only test for known substances. "It's a moving target because new medications are constantly coming into use. These gifts are an essential part of our efforts to stay ahead of the curve."

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In just a few short months since the equipment has been in use, researchers have made significant progress on multiple fronts. For example, studies are near completion to determine if the hemoglobin of the equine is altered by the administration of Inositol triphosphate (ITTP), which can make oxygen more readily available to working muscles and potentially enhance performance. Research is also well underway into detecting the prohibited use of non-drug therapies and naturally-occurring substances.

Racehorses are tested for prohibited substances under the authority of the Pennsylvania Harness and Horse Racing Commissions, which also employ a team of on-site investigators at each state racetrack. Samples are sent to the Equine Toxicology and Research Laboratory (PETRL) under the direction of Dr. Cornelius Uboh for analysis. Positive test results are reported to the Commissions for enforcement. Repeat offenses and certain types of infractions can result in an individual being banned from competition.

The cooperative program between New Bolton Center and PETRL has been ongoing for many years. It brings together veterinarians, chemists, molecular biologists and technicians engaged in an advanced drug research and state-of-the-art forensic program.

Collaboration between the New Bolton Center and PHHA dates back to the 1980s. Previous gifts have contributed to the development of a pre-race cardiovascular monitoring protocol, development of new drug testing protocols and a comprehensive set of guidelines for administering therapeutic medications to equine athletes.

“We’re very pleased to contribute,” said Richard Gillock, president of the MSOA. “The importance of these efforts for our sport cannot be overstated.”

About the Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen’s Association

Founded in 1967, the Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen’s Association (PHHA) is a trade group that promotes the development of harness racing in Pennsylvania. The organization represents horsemen at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs and Harrah’s Philadelphia Casino & Racetrack. Its mission is to provide a stable foundation for horsemen by encouraging competitive racing that increases fan participation and enhances the reputation of Pennsylvania harness racing on the national scene. Headquartered in suburban Harrisburg, the PHHA maintains branch offices at the tracks it represents. The website is www.pahha.com.

About Penn’s School of Veterinary Medicine

Penn’s School of Veterinary Medicine is one of the world’s premier veterinary schools. Founded in 1884, the School was built on the concept of Many Species, One Medicine™. The birthplace of veterinary specialties, the School serves a distinctly diverse array of animal patients, from pets to horses to farm animals at two campuses. In Philadelphia, on Penn’s campus, are the Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital for companion animals, as well as classrooms, laboratories and the School’s administrative offices. The large-animal facility at New Bolton Center, in Kennett Square, Pa., encompasses hospital facilities for the care of horses and food animals as well as diagnostic laboratories serving the PA agriculture industry. The School has successfully integrated scholarship and scientific discovery with all aspects of veterinary medical education.

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