

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: May 2, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations
Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No: 19-0002-S65
Assignment No: 19-04-0393

SUBJECT: Santa Anita Park Horse Racing

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Blumenfield – Koretz) to include in the City’s 2019-2020 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for the action of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors relative to Motion 19-2408 (Barger), directing the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to work with the County’s Department of Animal Care and Control to draft and send a five-signature letter to the California Horse Racing Board advocating for a thorough analysis of horse fatalities at Santa Anita Park, and updated standards, if appropriate.

SUMMARY

Santa Anita Park is a Thoroughbred horse racetrack in the City of Arcadia, within Los Angeles County. Between December 2018 and April 2019, 23 horses died at Santa Anita Park, which led various organizations to call for a closure of Santa Anita Park in order to conduct an analysis of race horse deaths. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Motion 19-2408 (Barger), approved on April 9, 2019, directs the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer advocate to the California Horse Racing Board for a thorough analysis of the recent horse fatalities at Santa Anita Park.

The Resolution recommends support for the Board’s action relative to race horse deaths at Santa Anita Park.

BACKGROUND

Many people connected with Santa Anita Park believe that the winter rains caused the soil to become too soft, which led to horse deaths. The Stronach Group, which owns Santa Anita Park, argue that standards for veterinary treatment need to be updated. In response to the horse deaths, the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) conducted an evaluation of track conditions in February 2019, ultimately concluding that the track was “100 percent ready,” as stated by Dr. Mick Peterson, Director of the University of Kentucky’s Agricultural Equine Programs. Several horse deaths occurred following the CHRB’s determination that the track was ready. This led CHRB to disallow the use of race-day medications, without conclusive evidence that race-day medications are a significant causal factor in the increased deaths.

In a public statement, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have requested Governor Gavin Newsom to “urgently form an independent panel to investigate the training and veterinary practices in California racing, including the use of bisphosphonates and other medications that reportedly have been used indiscriminately.” Numerous other animal rights groups and politicians have also tried to put pressure on CHRB to further suspend horse races at Santa Anita Park in order to conduct an in-depth investigation of the horse deaths.

In April, the Los Angeles County District Attorney created a task force of experienced deputy district attorneys and sworn peace officers with varied expertise to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the evidence to determine whether unlawful conduct or conditions affected the welfare and safety of horses at Santa Anita Park.



Tristan Noack

Analyst

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Attachment: Resolution

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles, with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, there have been 23 fatalities of Thoroughbred horses, with as-yet unclear causes, at Santa Anita Park since December 26, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Motion 19-2408 (Barger), approved on April 9, 2019, directs the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer advocate to the California Horse Racing Board for a thorough analysis of the recent horse fatalities at Santa Anita Park; and

WHEREAS, many people connected with Santa Anita Park believe that the winter rains caused the soil to become too soft, which led to horse deaths, while others connected with the Park's ownership group argue that standards for veterinary treatment need to be updated; and

WHEREAS, in response to these deaths, the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) conducted an evaluation of track conditions in February 2019, deeming the track conditions suitable for horse racing; and

WHEREAS, several deaths occurred following the CHRB's determination that the track was ready, which led to CHRB disallowing the use of race-day medications, without conclusive evidence that race-day medications are a significant causal factor in the increased deaths; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles and other cities within Los Angeles County have implemented a number of progressive animal welfare policies and practices; and

WHEREAS, on Friday, April 5, the CHRB postponed a meeting that was scheduled to discuss the possibility of suspending races at Santa Anita Park for time being; and

WHEREAS, horse racing at Santa Anita Park may continue resulting in deaths if action is not taken soon to discover the primary cause of the recent surge in horse fatalities;

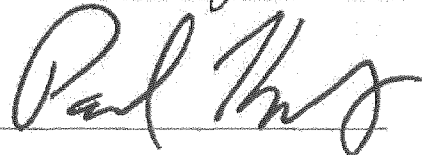
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes into its 2019-2020 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for the action of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors relative to Motion 19-2408 (Barger), which directs the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to work with the County's Department of Animal Care and Control to draft and send a five-signature letter to the California Horse Racing Board advocating for a thorough analysis of horse fatalities at Santa Anita Park, including updated standards, if appropriate.

PRESENTED BY:



BOB BLUMENFIELD
Councilmember, 3rd District

SECONDED BY:



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