

July 6, 2015

# DRUG FREE: THE POSSIBLE FUTURE OF HORSE RACING

By: Joshua Bryant

This year's Belmont Stakes was the stage for American Pharoah to become the first Triple Crown winner since Affirmed in 1978. However, it also brought tragedy when Helwan had to be euthanized after suffering a broken left front cannon bone.<sup>[i]</sup>



([http://www.kentuckytourism.com/photos\\_videos/photo\\_gallery/photo\\_gallery\\_display.aspx?cat=1](http://www.kentuckytourism.com/photos_videos/photo_gallery/photo_gallery_display.aspx?cat=1))

While a drug did not cause Helwan's broken bone, the fact that this horse was racing for the first time on a drug called LASIX (Furosemide) has rekindled a debate on the use of controlled substances and performance enhancing drugs in horse racing.<sup>[ii]</sup>

One of these performance-enhancing drugs, LASIX, is an anti-diuretic that is commonly used in United States horse racing to prevent exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhaging.<sup>[iii]</sup> Exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhaging occurs when blood enters the small air passages of the lungs.<sup>[iv]</sup> There are two main theories as to why this occurs. The first is that during periods of intense exercise the blood pressure within the lungs increases causing hemorrhaging.<sup>[v]</sup> The second theory is that jarring during a race causes trauma within the lungs leading to hemorrhaging.<sup>[vi]</sup> This blood can impair gas exchange and decrease lung function, which can lead to slower track times.<sup>[vii]</sup>

Recently, Congressman Paul Tonko of New York's 20th Congressional District announced that he plans to introduce the Thoroughbred Horse Racing Anti-Doping Act of 2015.<sup>[viii]</sup> This law would attempt to establish uniform standards for drug use in horse racing throughout the United States.<sup>[ix]</sup> At this time, each state dictates what drugs are allowed to be used within their state.<sup>[x]</sup> Currently, in Kentucky, the Kentucky Equine Drug Research Council advises the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission who sets the drug policy standards of horse racing within the state.<sup>[xi]</sup> The Commission's standards are found in 810 KAR 1:018 and LASIX is specifically authorized in subsection six of this regulation.<sup>[xii]</sup> Interestingly, the United States is one of the only countries that still allows the use of LASIX in horse racing; it is completely banned in Europe.<sup>[xiii]</sup>

This Bill, which would be completely funded by the horse racing industry, would bring the United States Anti-Doping Agency into the industry.<sup>[xiv]</sup> While the proposed bill does not specifically mention a ban on LASIX, it is possible that, if the United States Anti-Doping Agency began setting standards nationally, it would bring about huge changes. Recent headlines have indicated that the Breeder's Cup, which is an international event, may join the rest of the horse racing world by becoming LASIX free.<sup>[xv]</sup> If the United States wants to keep pace with the rest of the world, one of those changes may start with LASIX.

[i] Jeff Williams, *Helwan euthanized after breakdown at Belmont Park*, NEWSDAY (June 6, 2015 9:23 PM), <http://www.newsday.com/sports/horseracing/helwan-euthanized-after-breakdown-at-belmont-park-1.10515360>.

[ii] *Id.*

[iii] Todd D. East, *Exercise Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhage*, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, <http://cvm.msu.edu/research/research-labs/equine-pulmonary-laboratory/respiratory-diseases/exercise-induced-pulmonary-hemorrhage> (last visited June 22, 2015).

[iv] *Id.*

[v] *Id.*

[vi] *Id.*

[vii] *Id.*

[viii] *Tonko to Introduce Legislation Establishing National Uniform Drug Testing and Enforcement in American Thoroughbred Racing*, CONGRESSMAN PAUL D. TONKO'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE (May 29, 2015), <http://tonko.house.gov/press-releases/tonko-to-introduce-legislation-establishing-national-uniform-drug-testing-and-enforcement-in-american-thoroughbred-racing/>.

[ix] *Id.*

[x] Pia Catton, *Because states have their own drug rules, the creation of national standards has been discussed for years*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (May 29, 2015 7:21 PM ET), <http://www.wsj.com/articles/proposed-law-would-give-u-s-anti-doping-agency-power-over-thoroughbred-horse-racing-1432941662>.

[xi] KRS § 230.265.

[xii] 810 KAR § 1:018.

[xiii] Eleanor Beardsley, *Routine On U.S. Racetracks, Horse Doping Is Banned In Europe*, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO (April 23, 2013 4:03 PM ET),

<http://www.npr.org/2013/04/23/178622935/routine-on-u-s-racetracks-horse-doping-is-banned-in-europe>.

[xiv] Catton, *supra* note 10.

[xv] Gregory A. Hall, *Could 2015 Keeneland Breeders' Cup be furosemide free?*, COURIER JOURNAL (August 27, 2014 9:56 PM), <http://www.courier-journal.com/story/horse-biz/2014/08/27/could-2015-keeneland-breeders-cup-be-furosemide-free/14716291/>.

♥ 0 Likes   < Share

COMMENTS (0)

Newest First   Subscribe via e-mail

Preview   POST COMMENT...

[Newer Post](#)

[Local Food Movement Builds in Kentucky](#)  
(/full-blog/hooverblog)

[Older Post](#)

[American Pharoah is the 12th Horse in History](#)  
to win the Triple Crown (/full-blog/elexiswolis)

[SEARCHABLE ARCHIVE \(/PUBLICATION-ARCHIVE-1\)](#)

631 SOUTH LIMESTONE, LEXINGTON, KY

40508 (859) 257-4747 [BLOG.KJEANRL@GMAIL.COM](mailto:blog.kjeanrl@gmail.com) ([MAILTO:BLOG.KJEANRL@GMAIL.COM](mailto:blog.kjeanrl@gmail.com))