

**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 18**

**Approved**

**SOURCE:**

**COMMITTEE ON EQUINE**

**SUBJECT MATTER:**

**Federal Authorities to Take Action on Unsanctioned Horse Racing**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Since 2008, at least 382 cases of equine infectious anemia and 532 cases of equine piroplasmiasis have been confirmed in racing Quarter Horses, most with epidemiological links to unsanctioned racing. State and federal animal health officials and equine industry groups have been challenged to rectify the problems observed in this segment of the industry including the personal safety risks associated with entering these venues. The problems are clearly articulated in the August 6, 2022, Washington Post Article by Gus Garcia-Roberts, titled "A horse track with no rules. On-track drug injections, shock devices and a dead jockey: A "bush track" in Georgia is one of dozens that profit outside the reach of regulation." (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2022/08/05/bush-track-horse-racing-georgia/>)

The illegal activities identified, and in some cases, pictorially evidenced include illegal gambling, racing, and selling of drugs, inappropriate carcass disposal, administration and use of narcotics in humans and animals, and mistreatment of the horses. State animal health officials would benefit from a response by federal entities with authorities over these and other identified criminal activities.

Additionally, implementation and enforcement of federal-level regulations prohibiting unsanctioned horse racing would protect and promote equine health in the United States.

**RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to collaborate with state and other federal authorities to address the health and welfare of equine in unsanctioned racing as well as illegal activities associated with the events.

Furthermore, USAHA urges equine industry stakeholders such as the American Horse Council, the American Quarter Horse Association, and the American Association of Equine Practitioners to pursue federal legislation to prohibit unsanctioned equine racing.

## **INTERIM RESPONSE:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

While APHIS does not have regulatory authority over equine welfare issues at unsanctioned racetracks, it does have response authority over two regulated equine diseases often found in horses participating in this activity – equine infectious anemia (EIA) and equine piroplasmiasis (EP). APHIS routinely works with state animal health officials to respond to cases of EIA and EP and shares information about unsanctioned racing gathered during the course of disease investigations with state and federal agencies. To date, APHIS has provided data to state racing and gaming authorities, county and state law enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). APHIS will continue to collaborate with these state and federal agencies and any others requesting data or veterinary subject matter expertise on unsanctioned racing activities collected during disease investigations.