



**STATEMENT SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO PREVENT INJURIES IN THE MARYLAND
THOROUGHBRED RACING INDUSTRY
FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL
APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE ON MAY 25, 2012**

The Maryland Horse Council joins the Maryland Fund For Horses in applauding Governor O'Malley's proclamation of this year's week before Preakness as the Maryland Responsible Horse Ownership Week. Our organization represents horse owners both inside and outside of racing.

As a result of an increase in breakdowns at Aqueduct Racetrack in New York and a subsequent investigation by the New York Times, the sport of horse racing is under closer scrutiny by the press and the public this year than ever in the past.

We applaud the public interest in horse welfare, whether it focuses on Thoroughbred racing, or any other sector of the horse industry. Every equestrian discipline and every horse owner must struggle with the questions of when medication is in the best interest of a horse, when a horse needs rest, which therapies are most effective, and how best to manage a horse's career and retirement.

Maryland is horse country, and our work both inside and outside of racing on behalf of horse welfare is a source of great pride. Consider these facts about Maryland Thoroughbred racing.

- The Maryland Jockey Club spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in 2005 at Laurel Park widening the track, adding a drainage system, replacing the inside rail, and improving the surface. All of this was done to prevent injury to horses and jockeys.
- Fair Hill Training Center was created for Maryland racehorses to be trained in a relaxed atmosphere on both dirt and synthetic surfaces in a cooperative setting that attracts many of the world's greatest trainers. It includes a therapy center with a cold saltwater spa, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, solarium therapy, massage, and chiropractic services.



- The Maryland Racing Commission's Chief Veterinarian compiles statistics on horses scratched due to lameness, horses returning lame from races, and breakdowns, and makes them available to the Racing Commission and the public for evaluation. Maryland tracks have a lower injury rate than most because Maryland has a tradition of horsemanship second to no other state.
- Maryland has 79,100 horses on 587,000 acres of open space. More than 65,000 Marylanders are involved with horses as owners, employees, or volunteers. Maryland equine-related assets are worth \$5.6 billion. We have more horses per acre than Kentucky and were the first American colony to form a Jockey Club and race Thoroughbreds.

Many in the Thoroughbred racing industry nationally are advocating for improved safety and horse welfare standards. Both the National Thoroughbred Racing Association's (NTRA) Safety and Integrity Alliance, and The Jockey Club and Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association's (TOBA) cleanhorseracing.org advocacy site are attempting to work at the national level for reform in an industry controlled by state racing commissions.

Backstretch workers at Maryland tracks have devoted their lives to the welfare of Thoroughbred horses and they work tirelessly every day to prevent injury to their animals. The racing industry sets a high standard of horse care from which the rest of the horse-owning public has learned much over the years.

Members of the Maryland Horse Council applaud all efforts by track owners, trainers, grooms, exercise riders, jockeys, veterinarians, farriers, and everyone else at our tracks to prevent injury to Thoroughbred racehorses. These animals are one of our state's greatest treasures, and the outstanding care given to them is a source of state pride.