

Moving Ahead: Horse Racing Regulation In Ontario Officiating Working Group Summary Report | October 10, 2017

Overview

In the Spring of 2016, the AGCO launched *Moving Ahead: Horse Racing Regulation in Ontario*, a project directed at identifying and moving forward on common-sense reforms to the regulatory rules that govern horse racing. As part of this initiative, in spring 2017 the AGCO launched the establishment of three working groups to provide further input on a number of regulatory reform ideas that will ensure integrity, safety and public interest in horse racing.

The **Officiating Working Group** was announced in May 2017. The objective of this working group was to provide advice to the AGCO regarding:

- Enhancing transparency of officiating through improved communication between AGCO Race Officials, racing participants and the betting public;
- Enhancing consistency as it relates to infraction reviews, where possible and necessary, for in-race violations;
- Repurposing the Central Adjudication Room (CAR);
- Officiating recruitment and training; and
- A number of AGCO pilot programs currently underway, i.e., the use of drones at racetracks, the use of cameras aimed at improving the visual recording of on-track infractions and, the use of Twitter and Race Reports to communicate officiating decisions and views.

The working group met four times over the course of four months, and has played a valuable role in advising the AGCO on ways to continually improve its officiating from a consistency and transparency perspective. The AGCO is pleased to provide you with a summary of the working group deliberations in the form of the following chart, which sets out recommended ideas and follow-up actions the AGCO is taking or will be taking in the months ahead.

The AGCO would like to formally thank the participants of the Officiating Working Group. While the working group may have officially come to an end, the AGCO remains open to receiving feedback from the industry on regulatory matters and this can be done directly by emailing connect@agco.ca.

Officiating Working Group Context - Recommendations - Next Steps

Communication

Providing as much detailed officiating information to the racing participants and the horseplayers on race day is highly valued by all as it contributes to the overall professional integrity of the sport.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The AGCO should consider using additional measures to help inform the public of a review or infraction by officials. 2. The AGCO should make officiating decisions as quickly as possible, without sacrificing integrity and due diligence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Track announcers will continue to be utilized to make announcements. → The AGCO will continue to re-purpose the Central Adjudication Room (CAR) as a means of enhancing timeliness, consistency and transparency of officiating. |
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AGCO has piloted the use Twitter and Race Reports at Western Fair and Mohawk.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The AGCO should continue to explore its use of Twitter and Race Reports to support officiating communications on race day, including working to build a larger Twitter following by interacting more with industry through tweets and creating a hashtag that AGCO can monitor and respond to using Twitter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The AGCO will continue to experiment with its use of Twitter on race days, including evaluating its available resources to support this activity. Under the pilot program, the link to access the AGCO's Race Reports is now being tweeted at the end of each race day. → Enhancing the AGCO Racing Twitter account will be incorporated as part of a broader review of the pilot. |
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Race reports are used in other jurisdictions and have proven to be an effective communication tool on race day.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The AGCO should consider turning its Race Report pilot program into a regular AGCO activity, encompassing all three breeds with the capacity to embed video within the reports. The race reports should be generated at most of the racetracks in Ontario. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The AGCO is currently reviewing its Race Report pilot program which was offered at Western Fair and Mohawk in 2017 and expects to continue to expand this activity in the years ahead for both Standardbred and Thoroughbred races. → The embedding of videos into race reports is being explored and experimented with. |
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The AGCO supports regular engagement between Officials and Jockeys/Drivers.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The AGCO should continue its practice of offering the opportunity for general meetings at the beginning, midway, and end of the year, between Jockeys/Drivers and Race Officials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Informal general information meetings of all three breeds are currently taking place. However, formalization of meetings throughout key points of the season may be adopted. |
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Data

*AGCO is working to improve its horse racing data sets in order to provide more statistical information consistent with **Ontario's Open Data initiative**.*

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| 6. AGCO should make more statistics available on finish positions of horses that break from the gate and reporting of gelding status should be mandatory. | → Statistics on horses breaking from the gate and gelding status is being looked into as further data is integrated, categorized, and analyzed by the AGCO. |
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Education

The AGCO is committed to continually educating and creating a clearer understanding of the Rules of Racing in order to foster compliance within the industry.

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| 7. The AGCO should produce more educational materials (videos, website content, FAQs etc.) on common infractions and use the AGCO <i>Race Line</i> newsletter* to raise awareness of common rules/infractions. | → Copies of AGCO <i>Race Line</i> are being mailed out to each racetrack.
→ New subscribers can sign up on an ongoing basis through connect@agco.ca .
→ The AGCO will review the need to produce educational videos specifically on certain common violations/infractions as a method of further educating industry participants in a consistent and transparent manner. |
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- *The AGCO's Race Line newsletter was launched in spring 2017 with the intent of providing regular and timely information to the industry from the regulator's perspective. It will be issued three times a year in the spring, summer and fall.*

Integrity of the Sport

Ensuing the integrity and strength of Ontario's racing product benefits all industry participants, including attracting more pari-mutuel wagering activity.

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| 8. The AGCO, as well as industry associations, should consider highlighting what rules, racetrack activities etc. contribute to the integrity of the racing product. | → AGCO will use its <i>Race Line</i> newsletter to highlight integrity related activities (i.e., the use of the fair start pole in Standardbred racing). |
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Training

AGCO has a comprehensive apprenticeship program for new Race Officials and the industry would benefit from a better understanding of the program make-up.

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| 9. AGCO should continue to look for ways to raise awareness and understanding of the AGCO Officiating Training Program and should consider leveraging certain industry events as a platform to explain the program. | → The AGCO is reviewing ways to enhance the career page on its website as it relates to Race Officials.
→ AGCO will use its <i>Race Line</i> newsletter to profile information on how to become a Race Official. |
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