



May 21, 2020

To all Ontario Horsepeople,

First and foremost, congratulations to the 2019 Sovereign Award winners which were announced on Tuesday night. Last year was an exciting season of Thoroughbred racing and all the winners and nominees are very well deserving. Thank you to Jockey Club of Canada for their ongoing commitment in recognizing the great performances of our sport. Although we missed congregating together for the event like we have done for years, the efforts to still deliver an awards show to celebrate last season was much needed and appreciated.

Last week we received very positive news from the Government that horse racing without spectators would be permitted in the first stage of its plan to reopen the provincial economy. We shared this news last week, but I wanted to take the opportunity to thank all horsepeople for helping put us in a position to resume our sport. If you weren't so diligent and committed to following the safety protocols we put in place, we wouldn't be in a position to get back to racing on June 5 and June 6. It is equally important to continue to adhere to all safety protocols as we increase training activity at both Woodbine and Woodbine Mohawk Park in preparation for the return of racing. Please do not let your guard down!

For this week's update here are a few key topics I'd like to highlight:

**Training at Woodbine Mohawk Park:** Woodbine Mohawk Park will open for training on Wednesday, May 27. The Mohawk Park Race Office will be sharing details with horsepeople regarding this on Friday. Please be reminded that as we open Mohawk Park for training everyone must be extremely diligent in following all safety protocols that have been put in place.

**Qualifiers at Woodbine Mohawk Park:** Standardbred qualifiers are scheduled to start at Woodbine Mohawk Park on Thursday, May 28 at 9:30 a.m. A full schedule

of all qualifiers ahead of race meet openings will be shared by the Mohawk Park Standardbred Race Office soon.

All horses wishing to qualify at Mohawk Park on Thursday, May 28, Friday, May 29, Monday, June 1 and Tuesday, June 2 must enter with the Race Office before Noon ET on Friday, May 22. Preference for Qualifiers will be given to Ontario Sired three-year-olds as they are the first group to have races at the end of June.

The Race Office will produce qualifying entry sheets for the above four dates on Monday, May 25. Horses who currently meet the amended qualifying standards set by the AGCO will not be permitted to qualify on those four dates.

Yesterday, [the AGCO shared the temporarily amended rules of racing](#), which includes amendments to the Standardbred qualifier rules.

Any horse that was racing and eligible to race between the timeframe of February 1, 2020 through March 19, 2020 will be eligible when racing resumes, provided they enter within 60 clear days starting June 5 (can be entered up to and including August 4).

Please review the changes and contact the Race Office with any questions.

**Grandstands Remain Closed:** Please be reminded that the Woodbine and Mohawk Park grandstands remain closed to any spectators for training, qualifiers and racing as per the provincial guidelines. We are only allowing essential personnel to access our facilities at this time.

**Opportunity with TSN:** We are having very positive discussions with our broadcast partner regarding an opportunity to have more of our live racing aired on TSN. We are still finalizing those details, but we are very excited about this opportunity. We hope to share some good news on this in the coming weeks.

**New Dates for Signature Races:** It was an exciting week as we announced new dates for our signature races, The Queen's Plate (September 12) and the Pepsi North America Cup (August 29). It's too early to know if we will be able to host spectators at the events as that will be dependent on the latest direction from

provincial and municipal governments. Regardless, it's a very positive sign to be able to announce these new dates.

**Thoroughbred Stakes Schedule:** This week we also announced our revised stakes schedule for the 2020 Thoroughbred meet. While it is certainly unique due to the shortened season, it's an exciting schedule highlighted by The Queen's Plate and Ricoh Woodbine Mile on back-to-back weekends. A big thanks to our Race Office who worked very hard and quickly to get this done. If you missed it, [here is a link to the entire stakes schedule](#).

**EHV-1 on Woodbine Backstretch:** We are working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and AGCO veterinarians on addressing the presence of EHV-1 on our backstretch. We moved very quickly to contain the spread of the virus and further testing continues. While it's an unfortunate situation, our industry is experienced in managing EHV-1 outbreaks. As many of you may recall, Woodbine successfully worked through an outbreak of EHV-1 on our backstretch in 2013.

We received some good news last night as tests from Barn 10 came back negative. We believe that the virus is mostly centralized to Barn 12.

Training is continuing with physical distancing and other safety protocols in place to minimize the risk of the virus spreading. Although unrelated to coronavirus, many of the protocols we have already put in place to protect against COVID-19 are also helpful in preventing the spread of EHV-1. We ask that everyone on the backstretch takes extra precaution and follows the protocols that we have put in place with the AGCO.

We do not anticipate that this will impact our plans to open the season on Saturday, June 6.

**Ontario Racing Purse Allocation Program:** Ontario Racing has continued to work at processing all applications and preparing cheques. All cheques for the April applications will have been mailed out by the end of this week. Horsepeople with questions regarding the eligibility of their horses for the program should contact their applicable horsepersons' association directly.

**Stronger Together:** Once again, thank you for everything you have done to put us in a position to resume live racing in early June. As we approach the return of racing, there will be a lot to talk about. To that end, we are planning on holding another online Stronger Together video conference on Wednesday, June 3. We will share further details as we get closer.

Thank you and be safe,

Jim Lawson