

Additional Questions for the Record

**Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Hearing on
“Legislation to Promote the Health and Safety of Racehorses”
January 28, 2020**

**Mr. Joseph A. De Francis, Chairman,
National Horseracing Advisory Council of the Humane Society of the United States**

The Honorable Kathy Castor (D-FL)

1. According to research from the California Horse Racing Board, 90 percent of fatal horse injuries are tied to minor preexisting injuries - like microfractures in a bone. The stress and pressure generated by a 1,100-pound racehorse sprinting at speeds up to 40 miles per hour can cause minor injuries to become catastrophic breaks that ultimately lead to a horse's death. That's why pre-race detection and appropriate treatment for these injuries is so important, but some racehorses are administered pain medications to ease discomfort and reduce inflammation. These medications may mask these relatively minor injuries, making pre-race detection more difficult and enabling an injured horse to maintain strict training and racing schedules.

Mr. De Francis, are there models already in existence to regulate the use of pain medications in horseracing?

The only models in existence are the individual state regulations among the 30+ racing jurisdictions where pari-mutuel horse racing takes place. These nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) do require a prescription, but the rules and regulations around the use of NSAIDs are too permissive. Although there have been industry-wide efforts to harmonize drug testing rules and enforcement among the states, because each state is subjected to different legislative and agency procedures and timelines for creating and implementing rules within their borders, the rules will often vary. In a sport where more than 50% of the athletes compete in multiple states, differing rules lead to variations around when medications must be discontinued prior to the race, which has the potential to compromise medication and treatment programs that are intended to promote rest and healing.

2. Mr. De Francis, should racehorses be administered pain medications on race day? Why or why not?

Mr. Joseph A. De Francis

Page 2

No. Horses should only be allowed to compete when free from the influence of medications. Allowing a horse to race at high speeds when symptoms of pain, that may be caused by a more serious underlying issue, are masked by pain medications, places the horse and rider in great peril and at a higher risk for injury or death.