

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Technology, HISA Among the Topics Covered at Track Superintendent Field Day**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Track Superintendent Field Day wrapped up on Tuesday at Horseshoe Indianapolis after two days of speakers and panels designed to broaden the knowledge of those who maintain racing surfaces at tracks and training centers. More than 120 attendees convened in Indiana after coming from around the United States and Canada, plus Saudi Arabia, Ireland and England.

“It’s all about communication back and forth and sharing information; that’s what makes this event work,” said Roy Smith, who founded Track Superintendent Field Day in 2001 at what is now Parx Racing. “This is the third time we’ve had the event at Horseshoe Indianapolis, and they again did a tremendous job as our host.”

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) was a topic of discussion on both days. Ann McGovern, who oversees HISA’s Racetrack Safety Program, fielded numerous questions about how HISA regulations apply to track supers and addressed concerns about the increased data reporting requirements.

“We are all in this together,” she said. “Our goal is to reduce injuries, have uniform drug rules and get rid of the bad actors. I don’t think anyone here can argue about those goals, though we may disagree on how to reach them.”

McGovern stressed that HISA is not trying to tell track supers how to do their jobs, and that the data and information gathered from the reports sent in can help the industry as a whole and establish baselines and ranges for moisture content and other parameters related to track surfaces.

Eric Hamelback, CEO of the National HBPA, addressed the group and talked about the importance of safety while noting that horse racing will always involve some risk.

“What brings us all here today is the horse, and because you are track supers, you want the safest environment possible,” he said. “But no matter how good you are at your jobs, there are some things you just can’t control, and we all know that racing and dealing with horses has inherent risks.

“But we cannot make things safer just by adding more regulations,” he added. “If we continue to force regulations just based on perception, we are moving away from horsemanship.”

Michael Hardy, DVM, covered a wide range of topics related to emergency preparedness and response on the racetrack. Of particular note was his discussion of how new technology, including artificial intelligence, can help reduce injuries by detecting at-risk horses.

“The demand for the veterinary professional is higher than the supply, so (artificial intelligence) is an alternative to direct resources,” he said.

Hardy explained how 1/ST is working on an AI solution that could help identify horses at risk for future injuries by using an extensive system of cameras and ultra-wideband (UWB) sensors during races and potentially training. With AI, that data can then be analyzed to identify possible problems with a horse that might warrant a closer look by a veterinarian.

Monday’s speakers included Michael DePew on soil science, Jennifer Hudson-Terrell on human resources, Jessica Merklings on Canada Geese management and Colin Lyons and Lee Collier on turf course engineering. A track superintendents’ panel gave attendees the opportunity to share ideas and best practices, and a jockeys’ Q&A panel provided the riders’ viewpoint on track safety.

On Tuesday, Roderick Saylor and Glen Kozak offered an overview of the re-construction of Belmont Park, Dr. Trey Rogers covered turfgrass management and Steven Davenport discussed weather planning and safety practices.

“We continue to see an upward trend in attendance, and our industry sponsors once again stepped up to help make this event possible and free to attend for track supers,” said Steve Andersen of title sponsor Equine Equipment. “The men and women who work hard every day to make our racetracks as safe as possible are not always properly recognized for their efforts, but all our sponsors know how important they are to the industry, and we are all grateful for the work they do.”

The 2024 meeting is set to be held at Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course with a date to be announced.