

Additional Safety Measures Adopted at Aqueduct

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Aqueduct racetrack will not take entries for horses that have raced in the previous 14 days and reduce its weekday race cards to eight races per day effective Jan. 22, the association announced on Friday as part of a new round of steps seeking to address a stubborn spate of fatal breakdowns at the track.

The changes were made in consultation with the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, according to the New York Racing Association, which operates Aqueduct. In addition to the 14-day prohibition and the reduction in live racing, NYRA will raise the bottom level for maiden claiming races from \$12,500 to \$16,000, also effective Jan. 22, and its stewards will begin to maintain a "poor performance" list of horses that were beaten 25 lengths or more in their last races, NYRA said. A horse will need to work four furlongs in 53 seconds or less to work off the list, NYRA said.

"The measures announced by NYRA today constitute an important step toward addressing the troubling situation at Aqueduct," said Robert Williams, the executive director of the New York Gaming Commission, which regulates racing in New York. "We continue to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of each fatality in order to determine if additional actions need to be taken to protect horses and riders."

So far, 12 horses have died of racing-related injuries since the Aqueduct inner-track meet opened on Dec. 3. The latest occurred on Thursday, when You Take the Cake was euthanized after being diagnosed with a fractured vertebrae following a fall in the second race at Aqueduct.

The spate of deaths has become a grisly reminder of the winter of 2011-2012, when 21 horses died at Aqueduct. That string set off a cascade of events that led to the formation of a task force that recommended dozens of steps to improve safety. While fatalities were sharply down last year during the Aqueduct meet, the fatalities have rebounded this year.

One week ago, NYRA and horsemen met to discuss the deaths and said that they would tighten the criteria for pre-race veterinary exams and encourage trainers and jockeys to take extra precautions with horses. Martin Panza, NYRA's director of racing, also said at the time that he had produced a list of approximately 20 horses that would be barred from running at Aqueduct.

Veterinary officials contend that breakdowns are multi-factorial, and an analysis of large sets of data on racing fatalities have not produced many smoking guns, other than fatality rates being sharply lower on artificial surfaces. Data has also suggested that shorter races produce more fatalities than longer races, and that older horses suffer fatalities at a greater rate than younger

horses. In addition, horses in claiming races suffer more fatalities than horses in allowance races and stakes races.

NYRA said the names of horses that have been put on the "poor performance" list will be published on its website.

As part of the reduction in races on weekdays, first post at Aqueduct will be moved from 12:20 p.m. to 1:20 pm. First post on weekends will be 12:45.