



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR
October 27, 2020

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín, Councilmember Sophie Hahn, and
Councilmember Susan Wengraf

Subject: Treatment of Horses at Golden Gate Fields

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to the California Horse Racing Board to investigate the treatment and welfare of horses at Golden Gate Fields.

BACKGROUND

Opening in 1941, Golden Gate Fields is the only remaining thoroughbred racetrack in Northern California. The site sits on 140 acres of bayfront property along the Berkeley/Albany border, with the racetrack, stands, and parking located on the Albany side and the stables on the Berkeley side. The stables hold 1,200 horses who are cared for by 400 workers.

As of October 5, 2020, twenty-two (22) horses at Golden Gate Fields have died in 2020, the most recent death occurring on October 1. The latest death is also the 84th horse death in California. In 2019, twenty (20) horses died at Golden Gate Fields. Horse racing resumed in May after being paused in March due to COVID-19, although the stadium remains closed to spectators. A horse died as a result of racing during the first day that races resumed.

The racetrack is owned by The Stronach Group, which also operates Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, California. Recently, Santa Anita Park came under scrutiny after 38 horses died there in 2019. In March 2019, The Stronach Group announced some changes to improve safety conditions, including a ban on race day medications, limiting the use of whips, and installing a new safety rail on the track. However, with more horses dying this year it is clear that more must be done to address the health and safety of horses.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with adopting this recommendation.

CONTACT PERSON

Mayor Jesse Arreguín 510-981-7100

Attachments:

1:Letter to the California Horse Racing Board

Gregory L. Ferraro, DVM – Chairman
C/O CHRB Headquarters
1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95825

October 27, 2020

Re: Treatment and Welfare of Horses and Golden Gate Fields

Dear Chairman Ferraro,

We are writing to express concern over the twenty-two (22) horse deaths that have been reported at Golden Gate Fields this year, as of October 5th. Golden Gate Fields, located along the border of the Cities of Berkeley and Albany, is the last thoroughbred racetrack in Northern California and was a popular destination for Bay Area residents before COVID-19 prohibited spectators at the site.

Golden Gate Fields is operated by The Stronach Group, which also operates Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, California. In 2019, 38 horses died at that location, prompting investigations. In response, The Stronach Group implemented new measures at both sites, such as a ban on race day medications, limiting the use of whips, and installing a new safety rail on the track. While we appreciate efforts undertaken last year by The Stronach Group, the fact that more deaths have occurred this year, compared to 2019, shows that more must be done to address the treatment and welfare of racehorses.

Residents have reached out to our offices to express concern over the situation. We respectfully request the California Horse Racing Board investigate this matter. What is causing the deaths of these horses? What measures can be done to prevent such deaths from occurring? The City of Berkeley has long supported the wellbeing of animals, so hearing of these reports of multiple deaths is alarming. Please keep us informed of any actions you take to ensure the safe treatment and wellbeing of horses at Golden Gate Fields.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

