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# *notice*

**Date:** November 26, 2008

**To:** Michigan Horsemen

**From:** Racing Commissioner, Christine C. White *Christine White*

**Subject:** Blood Gas - TCO<sub>2</sub> Testing

As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the integrity of horse racing and to protect the health and welfare of horses that race in Michigan, the ORC will now test blood gas (TCO<sub>2</sub>) samples on-site at pari-mutuel race meets.

- Blood gas samples will be drawn both at random and predetermined selection based on previous elevated levels found in horses from a particular trainer, owner or stable.
- Blood samples will generally be drawn before race time in the paddock and will be analyzed before post time.
- The trainer, owner or other authorized agent for the horse must be present when the sample is taken to witness the sampling and to sign the ORC sample card.
- It will constitute a violation and a fine may be imposed if a horse is left unattended at the time a blood gas sample is to be obtained.
- The allowed warm up period shall be 1 to 1 ½ hours (3 to 4 races) prior to the race in which the horse is entered. If a trainer desires to warm up at a different time that varies from the allowed warm up period, he/she must notify the ORC blood gas collection agent or the ORC veterinarian on duty. Failure to notify the ORC representative regarding a request for a change in warm up time may result in a fine.
- The Michigan ORC has established a TCO<sub>2</sub> threshold value of 37 mm/L for both furosemide (Lasix) and non-furosemide horses.
- Any test result above the accepted tolerance level will result in an automatic second sample and second test.

- The trainer, owner or other authorized agent of the horse must be present when the second sample is drawn and may watch, through the window of the blood gas laboratory, the sample being analyzed.
- It is important to note that a high TCO<sub>2</sub> concentration is not proof of the intentional administration of sodium bicarbonate or other alkalinizing substances, only that metabolic alkalosis is present. Trainers should work with their veterinarians to identify any procedures or practices that may elevate the TCO<sub>2</sub> value.
- Regardless of reason, excessive TCO<sub>2</sub> values are a violation of the rules and the horse will be scratched from the race and a penalty on the trainer will be assessed by the stewards.