



Christine White  
Racing Commissioner  
Office of Racing Commissioner  
PO Box 30773  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Phone: (517) 335-1420  
Fax: (517) 241-3018  
www.michigan.gov/horseracing

# *bulletin*

**To:** Michigan Harness Horsemen

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

**Date:** March 30, 2009

**Subject:** Notice to the Industry Regarding The Use of Whips During Harness Racing

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Much attention has been placed on the health and safety of horses within the horse racing industry. Included in this recent focus is the use of whips during a harness race. The ORC Administrative Rule R 431.4265, Sections (1) (I), (11), (12) and (13) speak specifically to the use of whips during races on any of Michigan's licensed pari-mutuel harness race tracks. The following points are intended as guidelines that ORC Stewards will use in interpreting and applying this Administrative Rule.

- All whips are subject to inspection, at any time, by the stewards, ORC personnel or the paddock judge.
- Using any goading device, chain, mechanical device or appliance, other than the approved whip, upon any horse will be strictly prohibited.
- A driver is not allowed to kick, jab or punch a horse.
- Encouragement with the whip is allowed only when the horse appears to be advancing through the field of horses.
- The whip should only strike the number pad of the horse between, inside and above the level of the shafts.
- Excessive or indiscriminate use of the whip during a race, training exercise, or while on association grounds is prohibited.
- Excessive or indiscriminate use will be determined by: a) more than three (3) consecutive strikes without a change in action, b) causing visible injury to a horse, and/or c) whipping a horse after a race.
- Drivers need to keep a line in each hand from the start of the race until the top of the stretch, as defined by the whipping pole located at the top of the stretch.

- Excessive use of the whip (as defined above) while the driver has the whip in his hand with the line at the same time, (simulated one hand whipping) will not be allowed.
- At the time a driver has reached the whipping pole, he/she may put the lines into one hand and encourage the horse with the whip using his/her other hand, within the guidelines established above for excessive use of the whip.
- Drivers will not be allowed any blatant or exaggerated movements of the whipping arm such as when the elbow is raised above the driver's shoulder height and/or allowing the hand holding the whip to reach behind the driver during the encouragement of the horse with the whip.
- A driver is not allowed to strike a horse with a whip under the arch or shafts of the sulky or the seat of the sulky or use the whip between the legs of the horse, using the whip so as to interfere with or cause disturbance to any other horse or driver in a race, whipping a horse that is exhausted or no longer in contention and/or using a whip to interfere with or intimidate another driver or horse, or strike a wheel disc with a whip.
- Any trainer of a horse, which is suspected of being injured as a result of excessive whipping, will be responsible, when summoned by the ORC stewards, to report to the Detention Barn for an examination by an ORC veterinarian.
- Any licensee found to be in violation shall be subject to a fine and or suspension.

All penalties, including suspensions and fines, shall be progressive with repeated violations, the record of which shall be maintained over a driver's lifetime. Any days assessed as a suspension will be defined as actual days that live harness racing is scheduled in the State of Michigan.

**THIS POLICY IS EFFECTIVE AS OF MAY 1, 2009.**