

Kentucky Horse Racing Commission Votes to Ban Certain Toe Grabs

Research has shown toe grabs cause increased risk of injury to racehorses.

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On July 14, the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission voted unanimously to limit toe grabs on the front horseshoes of all Thoroughbreds in training or in competition on Kentucky racetracks. A toe grab is a stud on a horseshoe that serves to improve traction for racehorses. Under the new rules, a toe grab stud--or any other traction device--that's higher than two millimeters would be banned. The rule change still needs to go through the legislative rules process and a public comment period, but if finally approved, it could go into effect this fall.

The rule was recommended by the commission's health and safety committee, which looked at years of scientific research that demonstrates a significant increase of horse injuries when toe grabs are used. The rule change follows a Jockey Club recommendation to ban toe grabs. Officials said five other states already have adopted such a rule.

According to news reports, Eight Belles, the 2008 Kentucky Derby runner-up who broke both front legs in that fateful race and was consequently euthanized on the track, was shod with toe grabs. It's unclear whether the toe grabs led to her catastrophic injuries.