

CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD

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Postmortem Examination Review: [REDACTED] (trainer Rick Cisco)

Wednesday, February 23, 2022, via Teams Meeting

Panel Members were Steward Rodney Newhart, Safety Steward Thomas McCarthy, and Official Veterinarian Dr. Alina Vale. Also present in the meeting was trainer Rick Cisco.

Monday, February 14, 2022, via phone call

Panel Member Official Veterinarian Dr. Alina Vale spoke with Attending Veterinarian Dr. Lane Schloeder.

Wednesday, March 2, 2022, via phone call

Panel Member Official Veterinarian Dr. Alina Vale spoke with Attending Veterinarian Dr. David Valcheck.

Horse Information:

[REDACTED], 14-year-old Standardbred [REDACTED].

Incident Summary:

On January 14, 2022, [REDACTED] was scheduled to race in the first race at 6:45 P.M. at Cal Expo. The horse was warmed up routinely by trainer [REDACTED] Rick Cisco on the back track with the harness and happy bridle. In the southside crossties of Barn H while finishing getting tacked, the horse suddenly backed up, went sideways on the cement wall, and collapsed. The trainer had momentarily stepped away to clean the horse's stall then heard 4 loud pops like a firecracker which may have triggered the horse and caused her to hit her head. CHRB Official Veterinarian Dr. Eduardo De La Cruz was contacted at 6:05 P.M and evaluated the horse in right lateral recumbency. The horse displayed the neurological signs nystagmus and intermittent seizures. A blood sample was collected, and emergency treatment included: 15mg midazolam, 10mg dexamethasone, and 500 mg flunixin meglumine IV. The seizures and nystagmus decreased over 20 minutes. At 7:00 P.M. attending veterinarian Dr. David Valcheck administered 10 liters IV fluids (LRS), 7mg detomidine, 15mg midazolam, and 150mg prednisolone IV. Bloodwork at 7:20 P.M. revealed a serum amyloid A of 0 and lactate of 11.4 mmol/l, which decreased to 1.8 mmol/l at 9:40 P.M. The horse was in left lateral recumbency and had unsuccessfully attempted to stand. Dr. De La Cruz sedated (with xylazine) and euthanized the horse at 11:26 P.M. with pentobarbital due to failure to respond to treatment.

Necropsy Summary:

A necropsy examination did not determine the cause of the neurological signs. The brain displayed microscopic changes consistent with euthanasia or secondary to the seizure activity. Multiple organs (stomach, intestines, guttural pouches, head) had hemorrhage without inflammation thus disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) was suspected. A cholesterol granuloma in the right lateral ventricle of the brain was deemed incidental due to the fact neither hydrocephalus nor atrophy of the cerebrum were detected.

Racing/Training History:

The horse had 32 wins out of 294 starts. The trainer purchased the horse in December 2011 and had been training the horse for the prior owner. This horse usually had an annual layoff at a farm in Rio Linda, CA during the spring and summer, however, in 2021 the horse resided at Running Aces Racetrack in Minnesota

from May until August 4, 2021. The trainer reported the horse had developed pleuropneumonia ('shipping fever') after transport to Minnesota and was scratched for lameness due to a quarter crack in a hoof. The trainer described the horse as generally easy to work with and friendly towards people but had kicked him once. Occasionally the horse displayed stud-like behavior with other [REDACTED]. The trainer noted the horse had become a bit spooky with age and started to see things and jump when jogging. The trainer discontinued using a fly mask in an attempt to allow the horse to see better and utilized a shadow roll with the bridle. The horse's training schedule entailed: Sunday jog 20 mins on the back track, Monday/Wednesday/Thursday jog 25 mins, Tuesday train 1 mile in 2:30, Friday race, Saturday rest. The trainer reported utilizing the back track to prevent exertional rhabdomyolysis ('tying up') and noted the horse had 'windpuffs' and a conformation fault in the left forelimb.

The trainer reported in the last few starts the horse had early speed then would 'stop' (slow) in the lane, which was unusual for the horse. The final races were 1/2/22 and 1/7/22. The horse received several supplements in the feed, electrolytes, and iron via oral syringe daily. The trainer reported that once in a while the cobalt levels in his horses were 'a little high.'

Veterinary History Summary:

On 1/12/22 the horse received methocarbamol intravenously. On 1/13/22 the horse received electrolytes. The horse received furosemide prior to racing. The trainer reported that the standard dose of 5ml (250mg) furosemide seemed to dehydrate the horse as the horse aged and noted the horse would rub the hindquarters sideways along the wall. The trainer wondered if this had occurred at the time of the accident.

Daily oral medication included altrenogest (for estrus suppression), and omeprazole and sucralfate (gastro-protectants). The trainer reported the horse received the supplement Thyro- L (thyroxin) until May 2021. The trainer had utilized dantrolene after one episode of exertional rhabdomyolysis at Running Aces, but not in the near term. The trainer reported the horse had bled a trace amount (exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhage) at Running Aces, however, upper airway endoscopy had not been performed on the horse at Cal Expo because the attending veterinarians do not remain on site for races. On 12/18/21 the horse was placed on the CHRB Veterinarian's List for 14 days for front coffin joint injections. The attending veterinarian noted mild effusion in the coffin joints.

Conclusion:

This horse collapsed in the barn area and displayed neurological signs prior to a race. It is unknown what triggered the horse to collapse, however, it is possible that the horse sustained head trauma during the incident. The postmortem examination revealed hemorrhage consistent with disseminated intravascular coagulation, a condition that causes abnormal blood clotting throughout the body's blood vessels and can be caused by head injury.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alina Vale, DVM, MS
Rodney Newhart, Steward
Thomas McCarthy, Safety Steward
March 2, 2022