PLENARY SESSION 2: Pre-race Testing

Chairman: Professor E. G. C. CLARKE

PRE-RACE TESTING: GENERAL PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

The overall problems associated with pre-race sampling are likely to be fewer where racing is centralised and where special facilities can be concentrated.

In the U.K. and other parts of Europe it has been thought that it is on the smaller, country racecourses, rather than at the bigger centres, where malpractices are more likely to occur. These small courses are the very places where pre-race sampling problems will be greatest.

The temperament of horses involved must be taken into consideration; the highly-strung thoroughbred is on the whole more likely to present problems than other breeds. It could be claimed that it would require very little pre-race upset to the average thoroughbred to cost him a race in a tight finish.

In European racing runners fall into 3 categories:—

- (i) Those which are stabled within the racecourse security complex for a day or two prior to the race.
- (ii) Those which arrive in the racecourse stables only a few hours before racing.
- (iii) The remainder which arrive by transport from near-by stables and go direct to the saddling area without passing through the racecourse stabling security area.

Pre-race sampling in category (i), whether collecting urine, saliva or blood, would be practicable. Category (ii) would be possible but category (iii) might prove impossible.

Any system of pre-race sampling in Europe would cause inconvenience to trainers' normal routine and might be resisted strongly.

Though urine, blood and saliva are all "available" as pre-race biological fluids it is considered that saliva collection would be the most convenient for the veterinarian. On the other hand the analysts might prefer urine or even blood. Urine samples collected several hours before racing could be less valuable than those taken nearer to the time of the race. Unless collected by "officials" there is a risk of substitution of urine samples.

General security of horses and samples for pre-race testing would differ little from post-race sampling and therefore is not a major problem.

The analytical screening involved in pre-race tests would pose problems on account of the limited coverage possible in the short time available. Large fields could add to the difficulties. The occurrence of false or inconclusive positives in the initial analysis cannot be ruled out; these would present their particular sequence of problems.

Economic considerations would be of paramount importance especially for any ailing racing industry. To insist on day-before-racing mustering of runners at the racecourse would put an additional burden on trainers not accustomed to such an arrangement.

The cost of providing suitable veterinary and analytical accommodation plus sophisticated equipment for all race meetings, and the staffing and running of these, would be extremely high.

Realistic insurance cover for the operations might be difficult to obtain at a reasonable figure.