

Approved USTA rule changes, bylaw amendments go into effect

- from the USTA Communications Department

Columbus, OH --- Changes to U.S. Trotting Association rules and bylaws that were approved at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors in February 2017, were enacted and went into effect on Monday (May 1).

The changes apply to venues in which the USTA is the sole regulatory authority. As specified in the USTA Rulebook's preface, "the rules...are applicable only to those non-pari-mutuel meetings over which no State Racing Commission, or other State Regulatory Body asserts primary jurisdiction." It is not uncommon, however, to see state racing commissions adopt USTA rules.

The bylaw pertaining to procedures and eligibility for election of directors representing racetracks was approved to specify a variety of issues, including timing and eligibility of individuals for election. It was discussed and debated in Las Vegas in February, then remanded to an ad hoc committee for further review and amendment before being ratified by the full board again in early April.

Track directors now will serve three-year terms, as opposed to the previous two-year standard. Districts 1 (Ohio) and 7 (Pennsylvania) each picked up one additional track director seat, with Dave Bianconi (Northfield Park) and Kevin Decker (The Meadows) both recently elected to fill those positions, while Districts 2 (Michigan) and 5 (Illinois) each lost one seat.

Among the regulations pertaining to racing and breeding, dead heats in races where a point system is in place for eligibility to subsequent events, the points and purses will now be divided and/or shared.

The components of an official chart are now expanded to include trainer's name, reason for a scratch, removal of hobbles from both trotters and pacers, and designation of a second tier starting position. The requirement for specifying monetary allowances for age and gender in claiming races has been eliminated; the overall claiming price remains in place.

Regulations regarding horses that go inside the pylons were amended to specify the number of pylons crossed to constitute a violation, placing of horses that do so, and delineation of escalating fines and suspensions for drivers who commit pylon violations. The new regulations largely mirror those employed at racing venues in Ontario, Canada.

Drivers who believe their horse's performance in a race has been compromised by another driver and wish to appeal the matter to their USTA District Board are no longer required to lodge the initial complaint before they dismount the sulky. They must still appeal to the District Board within 10 days of the decision or ruling they wish to appeal.

For breeders, signature requirements for mare owners registering progeny have been simplified to remove the requirement when there is no change of ownership. Those seeking to register a horse as "Non-Standardbred" will no longer be required to spay or neuter their horse before such registration can be granted.

Rule book production is currently in progress, and a PDF reflecting all of the changes will be posted online at www.ustrotting.com by the end of May.