



NEWSLETTER

June, 2007

AUSTRALIAN RACECOURSE MANAGERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Website: www.racecoursemanagers.org.au

Your Committee: Warren Williams - Qld (Chairman), Martin Synan – Vic (Deputy Chairman), Lindsay Murphy - NSW (Treasurer), Geoff Murphy – WA, Murray Pyke – Tas, John Tonani - SA
Secretary – Arthur Stubbs

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Welcome to the 14th issue of the Newsletter for Racecourse Managers. Next issue planned for September, 2007.

2007 Flemington Conference – STOP PRESS News

The big conference build-up is continuing and has attracted great interest from Australian and international delegates and sponsors. The Victoria Racing Club is eagerly looking forward to showcasing the new Flemington from August 27-30, 2007 (it's a picture already). For those arriving early there is racing at Moonee Valley on the Saturday followed by the Wadham Park/Living Legends tour and the Welcoming Reception on the Sunday.

Latest news on speakers and topics is:

- *Greg Hall*, "The G", outstanding big race jockey will be Guest Speaker at the Dinner
- *Bill Blackman*, Sportsturf Advisor & Consultant in California, is preparing a comprehensive picture of agronomic practices on turf tracks on the west coast of the USA and the latest moves to design safer, "engineered", synthetic tracks.
- *Chris Stickels*, Royal Ascot Clerk of Course, will discuss the recent track redevelopment at this famous course (liked by our Aussie horses) and aspects of the UK Racing Scene including current experience with the Going Stick.
- *John Ridley*, Head of Racing Operations at the Hong Kong Jockey Club, is a late addition to the program and will talk about his successful methods of "Preparing a Business Case – measurable decision making to gain approvals"
- *Philip Ford*, renowned Turf Management Instructor, will give the benefit of his technical knowledge and experience of the fundamental principles concerning profile physics and chemistry.
- *John Fargher*, Managing Director of Steriline Racing, who has visited racecourses on every continent and in every conceivable location, will give an overview of policies, practices, equipment and facilities around the world.
- *Dale Monteith*, CEO, will review the history and features of the VRC and *The Flemington Plan*, will be thoroughly covered, from go to whoa, by *Terry Watson*, Racecourse Manager, *Ray Young* of Cardno Young on project management, *Craig Nuttall* of Akron, the contractors, *Terry Woodcock* of Sportsturf Consultants on track design, and *Bruce Stephens* of Anco Seed & Turf on growing and supplying the turf.
- *Future Water Resources* for Flemington will be explained by *Mark Whalan* of GHD Environmental Planners, and a *Racing Victoria* representative will give an update on droughtproofing tracks in Victoria.
- Features of the *Mornington Peninsula Tour* will be the sub-surface irrigation system and profile design of the training track at GSA Bloodstock, introduced by *Kenneth Neff*, the new grass and synthetic training tracks at Mornington Racecourse, discussed by *Michael Suey*, and the tracks and facilities at the Markdel Thoroughbred Training Complex, previewed by *Michael Freedman*

HURRY ! A late registration fee is applicable after July 27th

Racecourse Managers Awards - REMINDER

The 2007 Awards are for significant achievements in any facet of their operations by those involved in racecourse management, eg, successful track redevelopment, environmental management strategy, water saving measures, etc. The Racecourse Manager of the Year Award will again be for “an outstanding contribution to racecourse management and for developing fellowship amongst racecourse managers”.

Nominations are now open and can simply be made by contacting the ARMA Committee member from your State (see ARMA website under Contact Us) or to Alastair Dowie, Editor of Turfcraft International (p/f 03 5464 1382) before July 31. Anyone can make a nomination, “the more the merrier”. *Make sure deserving Racecourse Managers are recognised by their peers.*

National Track Standards Workshop

The National Track Standards project concluded with the second and final workshop on May 8 at Moonee Valley. The project has set in train an industry wide, collaborative approach to identification and implementation of the key factors in design and preparation of safe, reliable and consistent tracks.

Establishment of a national, uniform monitoring and assessment system of the key factors affecting track surfaces is the essential first step in attempting to connect these parameters with records of user performance and injury on a broad scale, consistent with knowledge gained in most sportsturf industries.

It is also anticipated that industry acceptance of the need for a system of national standards and benchmarks for monitoring, assessment and design will be accompanied by greater commitment by the controlling bodies to funding such developments and future research into issues that will emerge.

Major recommendations from the project included:

- Trials of the Crop Trak and Intellitrol data collection and reporting systems be continued and expanded to other venues and States.
- The concept of extensive track data collection and analysis be an integral component of National Track Standards development.
- All States to adopt the same Ratings system, ideally the 1-10 system, and States yet to adopt this system should trial it with a view to its adoption as soon as practicable to achieve a consistent and relevant track rating system throughout Australia.
- The status quo remain regarding optional tools used for ratings measurements pending conclusion of trials with the Going Stick over the next 12 months and that controlled trials be conducted comparing the Going Stick with the Penetrometer, Clegg hammer, moisture sensors, etc.
- National standards and guidelines are needed for all infrastructure items based on such factors as: practical design; safety for horses and humans; weather protection; operational ease; economy of construction and maintenance; economy of operation (labour, consumables); horse health factors; security; and environmental impact.
- Determine priorities and amount of funding required for specific trial work as recommended plus other activities needed for development of national standards to apply for funding assistance for a defined research and development program.
- An annual Workshop be held of representatives involved in this project to consider reports from the established Working Groups and that the Workshop make recommendations to the National Chairman of Stewards Advisory Group from time to time.

ARMA Environmental Policy

The Committee has been working with Terry Muir, Environmental Business Solutions, to develop a Racetrack Environment Initiative for Australian racecourses. This follows keen interest in Terry's address to last year's Newcastle conference where he underlined the responsibilities and possible ramifications concerning attention to environmental issues on racecourses.

It is anticipated that Terry will attend the Flemington conference and lead a session devoted to progress in developing an Environmental Policy Statement for ARMA and steps that can be taken towards co-ordinating a uniform national approach. The latter will have widespread economic and logistical benefits.

Around the Tracks

NSW

Andrew Small's latest news:

- During April, two major projects undertaken by the Country Racecourse Development Fund were officially opened:
 - On Friday 13th April, the newly realigned Grafton racecourse was commissioned after a construction program of some six months. Approximately \$1.8m was spent on these improvements, which also included associated irrigation upgrades to the course proper plus construction of a new Stalok® all-weather training track;
 - The following Friday (20th April), racing resumed at Dubbo following completion of stage 2 redevelopment. This project entailed large-scale civil works including realignment of the course proper, new irrigation infrastructure and upgraded track furniture. In total, approximately \$3.5m was spent on both stages of this project.
- David Sharp commenced as Racecourse Manager at Grafton on Monday 4th June. David was previously the head greenkeeper at Grandviews Bowling Club in Sydney and has many years of turf & horticulture experience.
[David takes over from Warren Ford who decided on a change of "greenery"]
- Over a 48 hours period on Friday 8th & Saturday 9th June, the Hunter Valley region (approximately 90 minutes north of Sydney) experienced some of the worst weather seen in NSW for many years. A deep low pressure system off the coast produced massive winds & rainstorms which dumped in excess of 300mm on many centres resulting in major flooding. A detailed audit of racecourse assets is underway at the time of writing; however early indications suggest that Wyong racecourse is the worst affected with the club's new Viscoride all-weather track essentially washed-away and substantial damage to public facilities & stables. Preliminary repair estimates are in the order of \$1.5m.

Other provincial tracks at Newcastle & Gosford were also badly impacted, but to a lesser extent.

The three (3) country racecourses in this region (Cessnock, Muswellbrook and Scone) appear to have escaped comparatively unscathed; however the sand training track at Cessnock will seemingly require significant resurfacing.

On a positive note, water storage at the three country venues is now in the best shape for many years (dams full) which is particularly gratifying for Cessnock as it ran out of water last Summer.

QLD

Warren Williams reports:

- Queensland Racing will be investing in the installation of up to 4 synthetic tracks in the South East Qld area. Suggested race courses at this stage will be Sunshine Coast Turf Club, Toowoomba Turf Club and Gold Coast Turf Club. The type of synthetic surface has yet to be nominated, however I believe there has been minimal research and trials so here's hoping the right surface is chosen for the climatic conditions and the proposed horse traffic for Sth East Qld. It is also envisaged that the new synthetic tracks will or could be used for racing.
- Rockhampton Jockey Club is investigating the reconstruction of their Loop Track.
- Gold Coast Turf Club will be undertaking the resurfacing of their Course Proper in the near future.
- Queensland Turf Club will be undertaking the construction of an oncourse stabling complex for up to 400 horses in the later part of 2007. The stables will be erected in the infield of Eagle Farm race course.
- Brisbane Turf Club and Queensland Turf Club have just completed successful racing carnivals.

[Your Secretary caught up with Norm James during a visit to the Maroochydoore area. Norm's business, Cabtech Cabinets, is thriving and was commended in an industry magazine for supply of kitchens to a new, upmarket development. Norm and Debbie now spend their weekends camping in the hinterland, far from the madding crowd !]

VIC

Steve Torney, Pat McEvoy and Scott Jarvis advise the following developments:

- Racing Victoria has installed four Thorough tracks at regional training facilities - Bendigo, Geelong, Mornington and Warrnambool. All four tracks are open with positive feedback. The Geelong track is 1853 metres in circumference and 16 metres wide with racing scheduled to commence on July 7th.
- Victoria has come out of the recent drought conditions with a bang. Heavy rainfall has caused the postponement and cancellation of several country race meetings. The Wimmera and Gippsland regions have been hardest hit. Bairnsdale Racecourse has been inundated with water with a recent fall of 160 mms.

4.

- Both Tatura and Hamilton Racing Clubs are seeking the services of Racecourse Managers. Any interested parties should contact the respective Clubs.
- The massive Flemington reconstruction is nearing completion with the last of the turf laid in April. The Club is on schedule to recommence racing in September.
- Canberra Racecourse, under the guidance of their dynamic Racecourse Manager, James Cataldo has completed their course proper reconstruction with the seeded mixture of bluegrass and ryegrass establishing vigorously. Racing is continuing on the Acton Thorough track with encouraging times and racing patterns.
- Mornington has successfully opened the newly constructed training grass track which is currently coping well with all training and jump out requirements.
- Bendigo has successfully opened a recently constructed Thorough Track training track - some good news for the club which had to transfer most of summer and autumn racing because of lack of water. The hurdle track (training grass) was renovated mid April and will be in use by the end of June.
- Cranbourne has finally completed irrigation, drainage, and re-use water upgrade of its course proper. Anyone interested in a used Upton Irrigator contact Race Course Manager Rob McNab.
- Yarra Valley has completed an irrigation upgrade of the course proper. The drainage works are about to start, weather permitting.
- Kilmore is back racing after a running out of water after the cup in February; the recently upgraded irrigation system is yet to be commissioned. The sand training track is to be upgraded and a new 300m jog/warm up track constructed, weather permitting.
- Benalla is going to have Irrigation and Sand track upgrades in coming months.
- Horsham sprigged their Course Proper with Kikuyu at the end of March and hope to encourage it next season and make the track a more drought tolerant surface.
- Donald, Murtoa and Horsham tracks in the Wimmera will all recommence racing soon after running out of water during the summer months.
- Wodonga is about to commence the first stage of their drought proofing strategy with the local council in building a series of dams and wetlands inside the course. They plan to redirect all Storm water run off into them from a new subdivision that has started next to the Racecourse. This project has a number of stages and will take the next two years to complete. A lighting upgrade for training purposes will occur in the coming months.

SA

- John Tonani has managed yet another successful autumn carnival. Investigations have commenced into forming a South Australian "Super Club".

TAS

Murray Pyke's information from the Apple Isle is:

- At Tasman Park, after the driest 12 months on record we had the wettest May on record. June has begun with very little rain in the first half of the month. Tenders will soon be called for the upgrade of the Tasman Park track starting in March 2008 (postponed from this year)
- Recent drainage carried out on the Spreyton track at Devonport and overseen by Pat McEvoy of RVL has seen their last 2 race meetings for the season go ahead whereas previously they would have struggled to race after the heavy rainfall they had.

WA

Drew Shimmon's mail from Pinjarra is:

- Pinjarra Race Club in WA is undergoing a \$2 million facelift to upgrade the track with new subterranean drainage. When completed, it is hoped that Pinjarra Park will be able to sustain an 8 to 10 month racing season, catering for as many as 30-35 meetings a season.
- The club currently races from late October to early May, with an average of 20 meetings per season. In addition to the drainage, the track's height has been lifted by up to 350mm, with state of the art cambering also a new feature.
- The drainage construction has been completed, and a sports turf management team are in place to monitor the growing of the new grass in line for a proposed grand re-opening on Sunday, January 6, 2008.