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by arthur hancock

BUFFALOED

The other night, I was watching TV and a few wild dogs were trying to bring down a buffalo. They were having trouble until they were joined by more dogs and, lo and behold, they brought the buffalo down.

I was reminded of the pervasive issue of performance-enhancing drugs in our industry. For a long time, the buffaloes and their minions have been parading around, snorting, and spouting off platitudes and promises about how they are going to clean up the industry and stop the use of performance-enhancing drugs on race day.

The truth of the matter is that the only interest many of these people have is in maintaining their status as moguls of the industry. Even though some of them are truly well-intentioned, they have no way or means to accomplish the banning of performance-enhancing drugs in the Thoroughbred industry.

The IHIA (Interstate Horseracing Improvement Act) can actually accomplish this. A few dogs can't bring down the buffalo, but many of us banding together can. It must be done and done soon or we will have no industry. Whether medication is good or bad doesn't matter and is not the question. The public doesn't want it. It turns them away. If you want to survive as an industry, you must do away with it and do it soon. In the same vein, no gambler wants to play a game that he perceives as tainted or crooked, be it blackjack, poker, or horseracing. Drugs are causing this industry to lose its fans, its gamblers, its reputation and its integrity.

As owners, we are paying a minimum of \$100 million a year just for the use of Lasix alone, not counting the money we spend for "jugs" to revive the horses after they have had this powerful diuretic. If you add butazolidin and all of the other veterinary charges to the list, I calculate that we are shelling out at least \$150 million a year. What a nice bonus it would be if we could do away with race-day medication altogether and have only trace levels in the blood--levels which are not performance-enhancing, that is. This would vastly improve our image, our breed, our pocketbooks and most important of all, the health and welfare of that noble creature, the horse.

The only way to bring about the change we seek is through the Interstate Horseracing Improvement Act. There is no other way. Some say they don't want the government involved in our business. Well, they already are involved. They gave us, at our request, the IHA in the first place. They can give us the Interstate Horseracing Improvement Act as well.

We are not trying to do anything that the Brits and others don't do. We want our industry to be trustworthy and above-board; that is all. The crooks won't let us operate on a level playing field without the Federal Government. That is why we have the FBI and other government agencies. You have a choice--don't trust the Federal Government and trust the thugs, druggers and cheaters; or join us in asking the government to implement the IHIA and once and for all put a stop to all of the nefarious practices that accompany the use of performance-enhancing drugs. In the end, if we stand together and support this legislation, we can regain the respect and support of our fans, as well as our reputation for producing the best Thoroughbreds in the world. All these years we have kow-towed to the buffaloes and look where we are today. You can join us or continue to let the buffaloes run over you and your children's future.