



op/ed
by Alex Waldrop

I was honored to be elected as chairman of the RMTC—the industry’s scientific advisory organization consisting of 23 major racing industry stakeholder organizations – in September of 2013. I chose to accept this expanded role after participating as a board member since the RMTC’s inception over a decade ago. I am passionate about RMTC’s education and advocacy initiatives, particularly the RMTC’s efforts to reform horse racing’s national medication policy through the development and advancement of uniform medication rules, a multiple violator penalty system, laboratory accreditation / external quality assurance, and a tactical research program. These initiatives are evidence that this consortium is the industry’s best means to ensure horse racing safety and integrity.

Executive Director Dr. Dionne Benson and her staff are having a very positive impact on drug and medication policy across the United States. In fact, it is my observation that the RMTC is more relevant to racing and in greater demand by racing regulators than at any time in its history.

Our industry’s management of medication policy reached a critical juncture in 2013. The RMTC board took action by recommending uniform medication rules, penalties and testing guidelines that are now being adopted by commissions across the country. These reforms are in the best interest of the health and welfare of the horse and the safety of all participants. They enhance the integrity of the sport, ensure a level playing field for our competitors, assist horsemen who race in multiple jurisdictions, and accomplish uniform regulation of racing in the United States.

The research that provided much of the scientific foundation enabling the progress of these new policies was costly and would not have been possible without significant donations from organizations across the racing breeds. With the continued support of the racing community, we will soon see the advancement of these reforms on a uniform basis nationwide.

Also in 2013, under the RMTC Laboratory Accreditation program, we implemented a comprehensive laboratory code of standards and the only U.S. racing laboratory External Quality Assurance Program (EQAP). Full Accreditation has been granted to two laboratories, Interim Accreditation has been granted to one, and the review of several other applications is underway.

One round of EQAP sampling has been completed for all eight applicants, and two rounds (which are a requirement for full accreditation in addition to a site inspection) have been completed for three applicants. The drug testing consistency and proficiency that the laboratory accreditation and EQAP programs provide will not only increase the integrity of the sport and the safety of its human and equine athletes, but will also provide uniformity as horsemen travel across jurisdictions.

Now, more than ever, it is important that the RMTC receives significant financial support from across the racing community.

To date, the high cost of laboratory accreditation has been borne by the RMTC in order to encourage as many laboratories to participate as possible.

The previous year also saw the initiation of administration studies for ranitidine, cimetidine, cetirizine, guaifenesin and omeprazole utilizing the KHRC Equine Drug Research Council herd. We hope that this important research can progress in 2014, enabling us to determine proper guidelines for those medications in racing.

The continuation and advancement of the RMTC Tactical Research program in 2014 is also of paramount importance. The objective of this program is rapid test development and deployment to support regulatory efforts to eradicate persistent cheaters. This effort recently enabled the identification of the unknown substances dichloroacetic acid and tadalafil in a case for the Delaware Racing Commission. The RMTC also oversaw the testing of compounded drugs confiscated in New Mexico and other jurisdictions. Acquiring unknown substances and conducting the necessary testing to determine their contents and effects is an expensive endeavor that would not be possible without a grant received from one of our stakeholder organizations.

We rely solely on funding from organizations and individuals within our industry who share our commitment to identifying and properly addressing horse racing’s drug and medication safety and integrity issues.

Now, more than ever, it is important that the RMTC receives significant financial support from across the racing community. I ask that you please make a donation, and that you urge your local tracks and horsemen’s groups to do the same.

We understand that budgets across the industry are tight, but the funding of the RMTC is vital to the integrity and future of our sport.

Alex Waldrop is the Chairman of the RMTC and the President & CEO of the NTRA