

BUSH TRACK RACING

PROBLEM:

'UNSANCTIONED', aka "BUSH TRACK" or "MATCH" horseracing has gotten a foothold in the state of Georgia. This racing is taking place at least two 3 track locations in Georgia that are part of a vast network across the U.S. that has its origins in Mexico. Within that network, there are sub-circuits, such as the southeast. Horses racing in Georgia, for example, are shipped from track to track each weekend between GA, AL, NC, SC, LA, MS and TN.

Unsanctioned horseracing brings tremendous public safety risks, as it is riddled with criminal activity. Bush track racing is known by state and federal law enforcement, as well as the national press for:

1. Spreading incurable and highly contagious equine diseases - EIA, EHV and EP – from Mexico,
2. Administering controlled substances without on-site oversight required by the DEA,
3. Catastrophic injuries to humans and horses - no ambulances available for injuries - human or equine on sight - Jockeys, horses and spectators have been killed at these events,
4. Egregious doping of horses (cocaine, methamphetamine, methylphenidate (Ritalin) and Fentanyl has been injected into horses right before races),
5. The use of electronic devices to shock horses for speed,
6. Narcotics trafficking via racehorse trailers across the Mexican border and across state lines,
7. Sales tax, income tax and property tax evasion - on goods/attractions sold at events – entrée fees in Georgia are as high as \$100 per person per day, locations of tracks registered as exempt under various real estate tax categories,
8. Noncompliance with state animal welfare (equine) protections - GDA does not have the manpower to regulate these events and check horses/paperwork,
9. Evasion of USDA interstate transport regulations - transporters need to be licensed, equines need health certificates to travel,
10. Illegal gambling,
11. Money laundering from drug trafficking proceeds through purchases of bush track racehorses.
12. Participants in unsanctioned horseracing are often involved in illegal cockfighting.

Our local law enforcement agencies currently do not have a tool with which to stop these activities and/or shut these tracks down because Georgia has no law on the books that says unsanctioned horseracing is illegal. These tracks exploit this loophole.

States that have parimutuel betting/ horseracing include in their statutes rules that prohibit unsanctioned/unregulated horseracing. Georgia has not passed parimutuel racing, so no such rule exists currently in Georgia statute.

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The Georgia Dept. of Agriculture (“GDA”) is mandated by the USDA APHIS as their counterparts in Georgia and is therefore wholly responsible for protecting Georgia’s equines from infectious diseases, tracking cases and reporting them to USDA APHIS. These match race quarter horses are known to be carriers and spreaders of EIA, EHV, and EP, (Equine Infectious Anemia (1), Equine Herpes Virus (2), and Equine Piroplasmosis (3)) - spread though needles shared between multiple horses with cases originating in Mexico. USDA APHIS also mandates that horses crossing state lines and upon purchase/sales (many of these races are claiming races) have valid health certificates. Accepted veterinary protocol demands mandatory lifetime quarantine of infected horses, temporary quarantine and re-testing of any horses exposed to infected horses. The GDA cannot currently fulfill that mandate for lack of resources, particularly on the weekends when these races generally occur.

It is important to understand that horseracing cannot exist without gambling. Gambling bets pay for the winners’ purses, which in turn bring horses to the track. So of course, gambling on the bush track racing is definitely going on, but these tracks keep the gambling underground and therefore impossible for local law enforcement to identify and prosecute.

CURRENT LIST OF LOCATIONS:

1375 Freeland Road, Dalton, GA – Whitfield County “Rancho El Canelo”

251/263 High Falls Park Road, Milner, GA – Lamar County “Rancho el Centenario”

137 E. 2nd Street, Glenwood, GA – Wheeler County “Sweetwater ATV & Horse Park”

276 Old Alabama Road, Milner, GA – Lamar County “Rancho El Caporal/Carril Huentis Ranch”

5001 Sunnyside Church Road, Pearson, GA – Atkinson County “M&M Downs”

See below for info on possible additional locations with related events.

SOLUTION:

Add to Georgia’s Title 16, Crimes and Offenses: “Participants in racing two or more horses without a Georgia state racing commission license and oversight is illegal,” that would contain large financial penalties and felony charges for each person and each occurrence for violations. The statute should define “Participants” as owners of the property where the racing takes place, horse owners, jockeys, and trainers.

State statute would solve the current challenge posed by the scale of operations and trying to identify individual crimes occurring at these events, such as illegal drugs and gambling. State statute would allow for investigation by both local and state enforcement agencies, such as a county Sheriff’s office or the GBI.

This would enable Georgia law enforcement to shut down operations without putting themselves in harm’s way.

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EXAMPLE OF BILL LANGUAGE - AS A POTENTIAL STARTING DRAFT GUIDE:

California Bill 1298 Digest that makes unsanctioned HR illegal

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE- 2023-2024 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

N0.1298

February 16, 2023

An act to add Section 19660.1 to the Business and Professions Code, relating to horse racing.

AB 1298, as introduced, Valencia. Horse racing: unlicensed penalty.

The Horse Racing Law authorizes the California Horse Racing Board to issue to any person who makes an application in writing, complies with specified provisions of this law, and who makes the deposit to secure payment of the license fee, a license to conduct a horse racing meeting at the track specified in the application, provided that the board determines that the issuance of the license will be in the public interest and will subserve the purposes of the Horse Racing Law. The Horse Racing Law makes it a misdemeanor for a person to directly or indirectly hold or conduct a meeting where there is horse racing and betting on the results, as specified, without first having procured a license.

This bill would make it a misdemeanor and subject to a civil fine of up to \$25,000 per day, per violation, for a person to directly or indirectly hold, conduct, or facilitate any horse racing in which horses compete against each other without first having procured a license. By creating a crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Bill Text

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 19660.1 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

19660.1. Any person who, without first having procured a license under Article 4 (commencing with Section 19480), directly or indirectly holds, conducts, or facilitates any horse racing in which horses compete against each other is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a civil fine of up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per day, per violation.

SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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DOCUMENTATION & SUPPORT:

Past DOJ investigations into bush track racing have resulted in criminal indictments by the FBI/DEA and future investigations could result in indictments under the RICO Act.

Organizations involved in investigating bush track racing and supportive of eliminating it:

- ✓ USDA – APHIS,
- ✓ USDA – Office of Inspector General (OIG)
- ✓ FBI
- ✓ DEA
- ✓ IRS Criminal Investigations Division
- ✓ Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiative
- ✓ American Veterinary Medicine Association
- ✓ California Department of Food and Agriculture
- ✓ Texas Animal Health Commission
- ✓ United States Animal Health Association, AQHA - American Quarter Horse Association, American Horse Council, the Animal Welfare Institute
- ✓ The Jockey Club
- ✓ All state racing commissions and sanctioned horseracing professional organizations.
- ✓ Depts of Public Safety in CA and TX
- ✓

Feb 15, 2024, Washington Post article Georgia Bush Tracks :

*“A couple of years ago, the federal government planned an intimidating show of force at an unlicensed horse track in rural Georgia... **Jonathan Adams, district attorney for Lamar (County, Georgia)** and two*

*other counties, said there was little more they could do without federal assistance **or a change in Georgia law to make unregulated racing a crime... ‘My hands are tied,’ Adams said. ‘I implore our legislators to make these bush tracks illegal** or at the very least mandate their regulation.”*

Aug 2022 Washington Post Milner Ga A Horse Track w No Rules Milner, GA *“...After racing commissions brought order to the sport in states where it was legal, unregulated “bush tracks” remained the norm in Mexico, popular among cowboys and narcos alike. In the United States, though, they existed only as a wild but minor foil to the rulemakers... **But now, experts and horsemen say, the bush circuit is quietly in a boom period, one in which animal abuse and doping go largely unchecked, hinting at deeper criminality and posing a potentially serious threat to the integrity of the breed...**”*

<https://EquineDiseaseQuarterly.com/July2023/UnsanctRacingRoleInInfectiousDiseaseszOwRxH5BdWgQ?e=hlhLWL>

Letter to DOJ from Congress on Bush Track Racing May 2024

EIA outbreak Oct 2024

2022 United States Animal Health Assoc Resolution against Unsanctioned Racing :

*“...Since 2008, at least 382 cases of equine infectious anemia and 532 cases of equine piroplasmiasis have been confirmed in racing Quarter Horses, most **with epidemiological links to unsanctioned racing.** State and federal animal health officials and equine industry groups have been challenged to rectify the*

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problems observed in this segment of the industry including the personal safety risks associated with entering these venues. The problems are clearly articulated in the August 6, 2022, Washington Post Article by Gus Garcia-Roberts, titled "A horse track with no rules. On-track drug injections, shock devices and a dead jockey: A "bush track" in Georgia is one of dozens that profit outside the reach of regulation..." ***"The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to collaborate with state and other federal authorities to address the health and welfare of equine in unsanctioned racing as well as illegal activities associated with the events..."***

2023 AVMA Resolution Against Unsanctioned Racing :

"The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) condemns unregulated racing of equids. All horse races should comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as tenets of the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act. Racing events must have a Category II USDA-accredited veterinarian overseeing the health of participating equids. Effective protocols for infectious disease testing and control are required, and illicit (prohibited and banned) substances must never be administered to the equids. Abusive practices including, but not limited to, excessive whipping; application of caustic substances; or use of batteries, buzzers, or other similar electrical devices that could be used to alter the speed of a horse in a race or workout are not acceptable. Euthanasia, when warranted, should be performed by a licensed veterinarian in accordance with the AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals ... ***Known health issues associated with this type of racing include the spread of Equine Infectious Anemia and piroplasmiasis in the US equid herd in addition to the use of many illegal substances. Abusive practices including excessive whipping, application of caustic substances, and the use of electrical devices have been documented in these races. There has also been documentation of jockeys suffering terrible injuries at these events. These races are unsafe for both equids and riders..."***

<https://www.texasstandard.org/May 6 2024-unregulated-horse-racing-bush-tracks-texas-drugs-cruelty/>
*"The Texas Animal Health Commission received a letter last week from people for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, better known as PETA. The letter detailed the results of a yearlong investigation by PETA into unlicensed horse racing, which happens at makeshift tracks across the country but, the organization claims, especially in Texas. **The investigation shows just how dangerous these races are for both horses and people...**"* *"We documented with undercover video taken and with collection of samples of syringes to verify the drugs that were made. And then we have verified other situations similar in Texas, largely through video that has been posted online..."*

"Georgia has at the moment, about four tracks, *and Texas, with 50, has about four times as many bush tracks or unsanctioned racing tracks as any other state in the country. So, we are particularly anxious for the attorney general, the governor and the Department of Public Safety, as well as the Animal Health Commission, to take action...."* *on the unsanctioned tracks, two horses race at a time. As they are going down that track, they are constantly whipped and electroshocked to make them go as fast as they possibly can.*

Before they're put on the track, they are openly injected with syringes, and our investigation has shown that these syringes typically contain cocaine, methamphetamine, Ritalin, caffeine, anything they think that will make the horse go faster. Many of them will die right there on the track. Others who have been openly injected with methamphetamine and other street drugs clearly suffer from that. They're electroshocked, they're beaten. Even if we are concerned about what happens in sanctioned horse racing, which is nothing compared to the abuses and the suffering that we see on these tracks. So, it's an appalling picture. It's a free for all, basically with nobody paying attention to the illegalities. Certainly, the state officials should be aware and should be investigating.

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“Every time a horse crosses a state line, they should have a certificate stating that they have been tested for a particular pathogen, for a particular illness that’s very dangerous – equine infectious anemia. And the reason for that is that it can spread rapidly through a horse population, and it can kill many of the horses. So when these quarter horses are brought in illegally, without the required documentation, without the required testing, they’re not only likely to be sick themselves, but they put every other horse in Texas at risk, too, which is something I think the sanctioned racing industry and anybody who has horses in Texas should be very concerned about...”

<https://paulickreport.com/horses-positive-for-equine-infectious-anemia-in-california-tied-to-unsanctioned-racing>
Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) has recently been detected in California's racing Quarter Horse population. On May 2 and May 26 respectively, two Quarter Horses were confirmed positive for EIA when tested for entry into a racetrack. In addition, on May 20, 24 cases were confirmed EIA positive amongst exposed horses.

A previous investigation conducted by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) identified a high-risk population of Quarter Horses participating in unsanctioned racing. Risky practices are believed to have contributed to transmission of this disease, such as the sharing of needles and other medical equipment or the use of illegally obtained, contaminated foreign blood products. Based on the increase in detection, the CDFA recommends increased surveillance in the high-risk population of racing Quarter Horses and requiring proof of a recent negative Coggins test for new horses entering a facility.

<https://www.avma.org/news/unregulated-horse-racing-continues-pose-risks>
Unregulated horse racing continues to pose risks - Over 100 bush tracks pose a threat of spreading infectious diseases in horses. By Coco Lederhouse, March 14, 2023

“...A persistent and potentially growing concern, according to experts, is the running of unsanctioned, informal horse races. While knowledge and awareness about bush tracks have increased, Dr. Pelzel-McCluskey argued that there is a need for law enforcement authorities to address the criminal activity. She also suggested that a law be authored with the help of the equine industry to make unsanctioned racing illegal...”

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Smuggler-horse-racing-is-part-of-drug-6667880.php>
“Quarter horse racing is ingrained in the drug trafficking culture in northern Mexico and South Texas.”,

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/the-feds-raid-on-a-bush-track-fizzled-so-horses-kept-racing-and-dying/ar-BB1ik6Gd>

<https://paulickreport.com/news/the-biz/theyre-going-to-take-down-all-of-racing-heres-why-legitimate-tracks-should-be-concerned-about-the-bush-circuit>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2022/08/05/bush-track-horse-racing-georgia/>

<https://www.horsenation.com/2024/03/28/op-ed-after-thoroughbred-racing-overhaul-unsanctioned-bush-racing-needs-more-scrutiny/>

https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/2023W_Resolution3F.pdf

<https://paulickreport.com/horse-care-category/bush-track-racing-responsible-for-rise-in-two-equine-diseases>

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Facebook Page Name	FB followers	Facebook LINK	GA Dept of Ag license?	Address	city	county	state	zip	phone	phone
Rancho El Carreto	41,000	Rancho El Carreto Facebook	NO	1375 Freeland Road	Dalton	Whitfield	GA	30721	678-677-5019	706-229-7999
Rancho el Cernenario	67,000	Rancho el Cernenario Facebook	12026 NO - no races since December 2023	251263 High Falls Park Road	Miner	Lamar	GA	30257	770-943-2110	706-461-2079
Sweetwater ATV & HORSE PARK	1,700	Sweetwater Facebook	NO	137 e. 2nd Street	Glenwood	Wheeler	GA	30428	912-328-5490	678-822-7611
Rancho El Caporal (formerly Carl	2,600	Rancho El Caporal Facebook	NO	276 Old Alabama Road	Miner	Lamar	GA	30257	760-524-1500	
M & M Downs		M & M Downs Facebook	NO	5001 Sunnyside Church Rd	Pearson	Adkinson	GA	31842		

total fb followers in thousands 136,700

RIDERS AND PROMOTERS, NO ADDRESS:

Carlier De Caballos Georgia	285,000	Carlier De Georgia Facebook								
Passion Carliera GA	27,000	Passion Carliera Georgia Facebook								

Related - Rodeo and Music Vendors:

Rancho el Encanto	45,000	Rancho el Encanto Facebook		RODEO only 1272 Hog Mountain Road	Winder	Barrow	GA		678-327-3444	
Charreada in Rancho Los Pinos				4885 Brownville Rd	Powder Springs	Cobb	GA	30127		

RACING CUADRAS (teams):

Cuadra Cristo Rey	142,000				Atlanta		GA			
Cuadra los michoacanos de Atlanta Ga							GA			
Cuadra Rancho el diamante	23,000	Rancho el diamante Facebook			MEXICO		GA		678-308-6379	ATLANTA GA
Cuadra Compadres Mial Ejemplo	25,000	Compadres Mial Ejemplo Facebook								

50 to 100 dollars a head for tickets, with a minimum 1,000 people in attendance once or twice a week =

90 per ticket

1000 tickets sold

30 weeks/events a year

2,700,000 revenue just for tickets