



## **Ontario Association of Equine Practitioners**

71 Princess Street, Elora, ON, N0B 1S0 • 519-846-2290 • [ruthoap@bell.net](mailto:ruthoap@bell.net)

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# Ontario's Racehorses are Important to Everyone

The Ontario Association of Equine Practitioners, the professional organization representing equine veterinarians in Ontario, today announced that they are standing proudly alongside horse people in the support of the Ontario Horse Racing industry and the Slots at Racetracks Program.

This show of support follows the release of the provincial government's "Drummond Report" on February 15, 2012. The proposed recommendations in this report include breaking a commercial contract between the horse racing industry, host municipalities and the OLG. This contract was developed to provide the horse racing industry a percentage of slot revenue in exchange for providing and maintaining facilities, sharing in the costs of operations, allowing competition for existing racetrack entertainment dollars and other benefits to the OLG. The racing industry is the second largest agricultural sector in the province while the Slots at Racetracks Program generates over \$1.1 billion a year for the Ontario government; loss of this revenue sharing will affect the livelihood of the 31, 441 full time racing industry participants and those in associated industries thus impacting 60,000 people in the province at a time when jobs are critical to the economy.

The ending of the Slots at Racetracks Program will also affect the health and welfare of all Ontario horses. It will directly impact the profession of equine medicine and the veterinarians who have dedicated their lives to the care of these tremendous equine athletes and to the breeding industry that produces them. The impact of the racing industry on veterinary medicine has been considerable. The development of state-of-the-art equipment to improve diagnostics and therapeutics has been driven by the investment made by all participants in the racing industry and an expectation to provide the highest quality of care to the horse. Almost 100% of the funding provided to Equine Guelph for research into equine diseases and disorders is derived from the racing industry. This research has produced internationally renowned treatments which have benefited all breeds not just those involved in racing.

Not only is equine research invaluable to all horses, but humans may also benefit from investigation into equine conditions. The North American concept of "One Medicine" supports research that compares medical conditions and diseases in humans and animals, looking for similarities in the development of disease, diagnosis and treatment. For example, cardiac

conditions in athletes and joint injury and cartilage repair are areas of research being investigated in both species. Collaboration between scientists at the University of Guelph, McMaster University and the University of Western Ontario is ongoing with respect to these conditions in the horse. Racehorses may hold the key to solving these serious issues in people, however, if the Slots at Racetrack Program contract is broken, future scientific investigation will be negatively impacted.

If the Slots at Racetrack Program disappears, research funding will dwindle, fewer equine veterinarians will be available in rural Ontario, pharmaceutical companies will reduce their investment in developing new equine medications and preventative vaccines and again horses of all breeds will be affected.

And what will happen to the surplus of racehorses if the contract for the Slots at Racetracks Program is broken? Along with the economic hardships that rural Ontario will face, there would be the trauma of hundreds of horses being sent for slaughter or euthanized

To quote a 2011 report prepared for the Government of Canada entitled “Healthy Animals, Healthy Canada”; “Animals (horses) are integral to Canadian culture and society, to our economic well-being and, in many ways, to our health. For the health of our horses and our economy, please support the Slots at Racetracks Program.

For more information on the Slots at Racetracks Program, please go to [www.ohria.com](http://www.ohria.com) or [www.value4money.ca](http://www.value4money.ca)

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Melanie Barham DVM  
OAEP - President

Alison Moore DVM, DVSc, DACVIM  
OAEP- Racing Committee Chair