

THE JOCKEY CLUB
THOROUGHBRED SAFETY COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION
August 1, 2024

Recommendation: All North American racetracks should fully participate in the Maintenance Quality System to record track maintenance and weather information

Maintenance of racing surfaces in North America is an important element in strategies focused on improving the welfare and safety of horses that train and race over those surfaces. The Maintenance Quality System (MQS), managed by the independent, non-profit Racing Surfaces Testing Laboratory (RSTL), improves the quality of the maintenance and monitoring data collected by racetracks and provides an opportunity to learn how to respond to that data to improve track safety for the benefit of horses and riders. While many tracks use the MQS, there is not universal collection or recording of daily track maintenance and weather data.

HISA Racetrack Safety Program Rule 2154 (Racetrack Surface Monitoring) sets out the minimum elements for racetrack surface inspections, daily monitoring and equipment:

(b) Pre-meet inspection shall be performed on all surfaces prior to the start of each Race Meet with sufficient time allotted to facilitate corrections of any issues prior to racing. For Race Meets spanning periods with significant weather variation, inspections shall be performed seasonally prior to anticipated weather changes.

(1) Inspections for dirt and synthetic surfaces shall include the following elements:

(i) Determine and document race and training track configurations and geometries, including:

(A) Geometry and slopes of straights and turns and slopes at each distance marker pole;

(B) The accuracy of distances from the finish line to the marker poles; and

(C) Cushion and base geometries;

(ii) Base inspection, including windrowing and base survey, surface survey, ground penetrating radar, or other method;

(iii) Mechanical properties of racing and training tracks using a biomechanical surface tester shall be determined and documented;

(iv) Surface material samples of racing and training tracks shall be analyzed for material composition pursuant to the Racetrack Surface Standard Practices Document; and

(v) Corrective measures to address issues under paragraphs (i) through (iv) above.

(2) Inspections for turf surfaces shall include the following elements:

(i) Determine and document racetrack configuration and geometry, including:

(A) Geometry and slopes of straights and turns and slopes at each distance marker pole;

(B) irrigation systems;

- (C) turf profile; and
 - (D) ensure distances from the finish line to the marker poles are correct;
 - (ii) Document turf species;
 - (iii) Mechanical properties of racing and training tracks using a surface tester should be determined and documented;
 - (iv) Surface material samples of racing and training tracks shall be analyzed for material composition pursuant to the Racetrack Surface Standard Practices Document;
 - (v) The irrigation system must be tested to evaluate function of all components and water coverage including gaps and overlap; and
 - (vi) Corrective measures to address issues under paragraphs (i) through (v) above.
- (c) Daily measurements shall be taken at the beginning of all daily training and racing sessions for racing and training tracks, and taken at each 1/4 mile marker pole at locations 5 and 15 feet outside the inside rail.
- (1) For dirt and synthetic surfaces, such daily measurements shall include:
 - (i) Moisture content;
 - (ii) Cushion depth; and
 - (iii) Weather conditions and precipitation at 15-minute intervals from a national or local weather service.
 - (2) For turf surfaces, such daily measurements shall include:
 - (i) Moisture content; and
 - (ii) Penetration and shear properties.
- (d) Surface equipment inventory, surface maintenance logs, and surface material addition or renovation logs shall be maintained and submitted to the Authority.
- (1) Daily surface maintenance logs should include equipment used, direction of travel, and water administration.
 - (2) Documentation of the source, timing, quantity, and method of all additions to the surfaces shall be submitted to the Authority.

The data contained in the MQS databases would also be a valuable addition to facilitate new equine injury research utilizing the Equine Injury Database and to support safety related investment. Currently pre-meet inspection data and racetrack composition data is complete for all Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Authority tracks. However, improved submission of a daily, consistent and uniform data form from all tracks to the MQS is necessary to ensure it is a valid source of data for such analysis.

The Thoroughbred Safety Committee calls for:

“Beginning with those racetracks under HISA regulation, all tracks should fully participate in the Maintenance Quality System to record track maintenance and weather information. At a minimum, the data to be collected should be the elements set forth in HISA Racetrack Safety Program Rule 2154 (Racetrack Surface Monitoring). Where a racetrack lacks the resources to monitor the required elements, they should invest in appropriate equipment or personnel to ensure all daily maintenance and weather data is collected and recorded.”