

THE JOCKEY CLUB
THOROUGHBRED SAFETY COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION
August 1, 2024

Recommendation: All necropsies on Thoroughbred racehorses that suffer a fatal injury in racing or training should be conducted in accordance with AAEP Guidelines

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) approved Rule 2170 (Necropsies) mandating a necropsy for all horses that die or are euthanized at a covered racetrack facility. While this rule is a significant step forward, the rule does not include required exam protocols. The performance of standardized necropsies by certified veterinary pathologists and the collection of necropsy-related data in a standardized format will enable the information to serve as a data source for research directed at improving safety and preventing injuries for Thoroughbreds in North America. A “necropsy standard operating procedure” is contemplated by the rule but at this time, the system appears to allow for only PDF necropsy reports to be uploaded.

The Thoroughbred Safety Committee recommends that until such time as an SOP is developed the American Association of Equine Practitioners’ 2020 document entitled [AAEP Guidelines for the Necropsy of Racehorses](#) (“Guidelines”) should be used as a minimum standard for the performance of all racing-related necropsies. In addition, all racetracks not subject to HISA’s jurisdiction should immediately implement rules or policies to effect implementation of the Guidelines for all racing-related fatalities.

For reference Rule 2170 reads:

2170. Necropsies

(a) All Horses that die or are euthanized on Racetrack grounds shall have an autopsy (necropsy) examination performed.

(b) Necropsies should be performed at facilities and by personnel with capabilities and expertise to perform necropsy examination of racehorses. Relationships and contact information shall be included in the necropsy standard operating procedure. The Veterinarian performing the necropsy shall not be an Attending Veterinarian of the affected Horse.

(c) Field necropsy is strongly discouraged. When a field necropsy is the only practical option available, necropsy examinations shall be performed under direct or indirect supervision of a board-certified pathologist including phone call guidance or video conferencing. Necropsies shall be performed in a secure area on all Horses that die or are euthanized on Racetrack premises, isolated from the general public. Whenever possible, the Veterinarian performing the necropsy shall not be an Attending Veterinarian of the affected Horse.

(d) Transportation options for necropsy cases and invoicing for the transportation and necropsy shall be identified prior to need and included in a standard operating procedure. Secure storage, pending transport, and transportation of the body should be

managed in such a way that tissue degradation and the development of post-mortem artifacts are minimized. Care shall also be taken to implement sound infection control practices with respect to equine infectious or zoonotic disease.

(e) Gross necropsy examination findings must be submitted by the Regulatory Veterinarian to the Authority within 72 hours of receiving the necropsy report, and updates submitted to the Authority within 72 hours as the results of ancillary tests and the final report are received. This workflow shall be included in the necropsy standard operating procedures.