

**THE JOCKEY CLUB  
THOROUGHBRED SAFETY COMMITTEE  
RECOMMENDATION  
March 27, 2019**

**Recommendation: Discontinue Use of Bisphosphonates in Horses in Race Training**

Regulators, industry stakeholders, and veterinarians have recently expressed growing concern over the use of the medications broadly referred to as bisphosphonates in a manner inconsistent with the indications for use printed on the label.

Manufacturers recommend the medication for use in the treatment of a specific type of bone disease in the hoof of horses aged 4 years and older. A consensus of anecdotal reports indicates the medication is increasingly used in horses less than 4 years old for the treatment of pain associated with inflammation within bone.

The medication disrupts the normal restorative processes that occur in bone that strengthen the skeletal system of the horse to adapt to race training. Subject matter experts have opined that the off-label use of these medications in younger horses, which is in direct contravention of FDA approval, may render bone more susceptible to fracture.

The committee applauds the recent action by sales companies to restrict the use of bisphosphonates in horses sold at public auction. The committee further applauds those organizations and individuals pledging financial contributions to further study the mechanisms of action of bisphosphonates and to improve detection.

Based upon testimony from subject matter experts before The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Safety Committee, these medications remain in the horse for prolonged periods of time and continue to exert effects possibly for months after administration. Further testimony indicated that no racing jurisdiction in the United States currently tests for these substances, in part due to the difficulty in ascribing fault because of the long half-life of the drug.

Based upon these findings, The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Safety Committee calls for:

“The strict avoidance of bisphosphonates in horses less than 4 years old as indicated on the packaging label, and furthermore, the immediate discontinuation of the use of bisphosphonates in all horses currently in race training regardless of age.”

This recommendation is consistent with the recent announcement from the American Association of Equine Practitioners calling for cessation of all off-label use of bisphosphonates in horses and complements a recent report from a Havemeyer meeting of subject matter experts concluding that limited evidence existed for the administration of bisphosphonates even pursuant to the uses indicated on the label. The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Safety Committee believes that bisphosphonates have no place in the

training horse because any interference with normal processes of skeletal adaptation to race training in the horse introduces an unacceptable risk of future injury, which could be avoided.

More information may be found at: <https://courses.grayson-jockeyclub.org/node/265>