



The Horsemen's f Newsletter

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Maryland Horse Slaughter Law Takes Effect July 1

A new law signed by Governor Wes Moore on April 14 makes it a criminal offense to knowingly send a racehorse or breeding stock to slaughter for commercial purposes. It takes effect on July 1, 2026.

For trainers, owners and breeders, this may have an effect on how horses transition out of your care and/or ownership. It is essential for individuals involved in racing to know where the line is, what the consequences are for crossing it, and what resources are available to help them make responsible placement decisions before July 1 arrives.

What the Law Says

Supported by the MTHA, the New Maryland Jockey Club and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association, House Bill 228, now codified under Chapter 84 prohibits two categories of conduct:

First, no person may slaughter or cause the slaughter of a racehorse in Maryland for any commercial purpose, including for human or animal consumption.

Second, and more directly relevant to the barn area, no person may purchase, sell, transfer, offer for sale, import into Maryland, or transport a racehorse if that person knows or reasonably should know the horse will be slaughtered for a commercial purpose.

The law's definition of "racehorse" encompasses horses bred or intended for racing (stallions, broodmares, foals, weanlings, yearlings, etc.), horses recorded on the backstretch of a Maryland track, horses that have had a recorded workout at a Maryland facility, and horses

— Continued on mdhorsemen.com ➔

\$700,000 MD Bred Summer Bonus Program Returns



As Maryland horsemen prepare for the annual summer racing break at Laurel Park, the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (MTHA) and The Maryland Jockey Club (TMJC) are pleased to announce the return of the Maryland-Bred Owner & Developer Bonus Program at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park for the summer of 2026.

Following a highly successful debut in 2025, the program will return with an expanded

\$700,000 bonus pool, representing a \$100,000 increase over last year. Approved by the Maryland Racing Commission, the initiative was created to provide continued opportunities and financial incentives for Maryland-bred horses competing outside the state during Maryland's temporary summer hiatus in live racing.

The 2026 program will run from July 3 through August 23, coinciding with the Laurel Park summer break. During ➔ **Back Page**

June Mobile Dentist Dates Added

Following an overwhelmingly successful return to Laurel Park this month, the Mobile Dentist program has officially added several new June dates to continue providing much-needed dental care services to Maryland's backstretch community.

The program, which recently returned for the first time in nearly two years, was met with tremendous demand from horsemen and backside workers. The first two days were fully booked and generated an extremely positive response from participants, many of whom received cleanings, extractions, evaluations, and follow-up treatment planning.

Thanks to funding support from the Laurel Multiservices Center, the Mobile Dentist operates

directly on the Laurel Park backstretch, making dental care far more accessible for horsemen.

The newly added June dates are as follows: Monday, June 1, Monday, June 8, Tuesday, June 9, Monday, June 15. All visits are 9AM to 4PM

One of the major improvements to the program has been the implementation of a streamlined online registration and scheduling system developed specifically for the initiative. Patients complete their medical and dental history online in advance and upload their MRC badges before arriving, allowing the check-in process to move quickly and efficiently.

The system also automatically sends appointment reminder text messages to participants ahead of their scheduled visits.

To Register for an Appointment Visit:

mdhorsemen.com/mobiledentist

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: MTHA Board Clarifies Misinformation

In recent weeks, a significant amount of misinformation has been circulated regarding the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association's recent amendments and the bylaw amendments being proposed by member and trainer John J. Robb. That misinformation was prominently displayed during the recent May 2026 meeting of the Maryland Racing Commission.

The MTHA Board of Directors believes it is important to communicate clearly with its membership so that horsemen fully understand both what was originally proposed and what was ultimately adopted by the Board.

In February 2026, the MTHA received a request for a Special Board Meeting to consider several proposed bylaw amendments.

The proposals submitted by Mr. Robb at that time included:

1. OWNER ELIGIBILITY - To be eligible to vote for, serve as, and remain a member of the Board of Directors as an Owner representative, an Owner must start a minimum of ten (10) races in the State of Maryland during each calendar year.

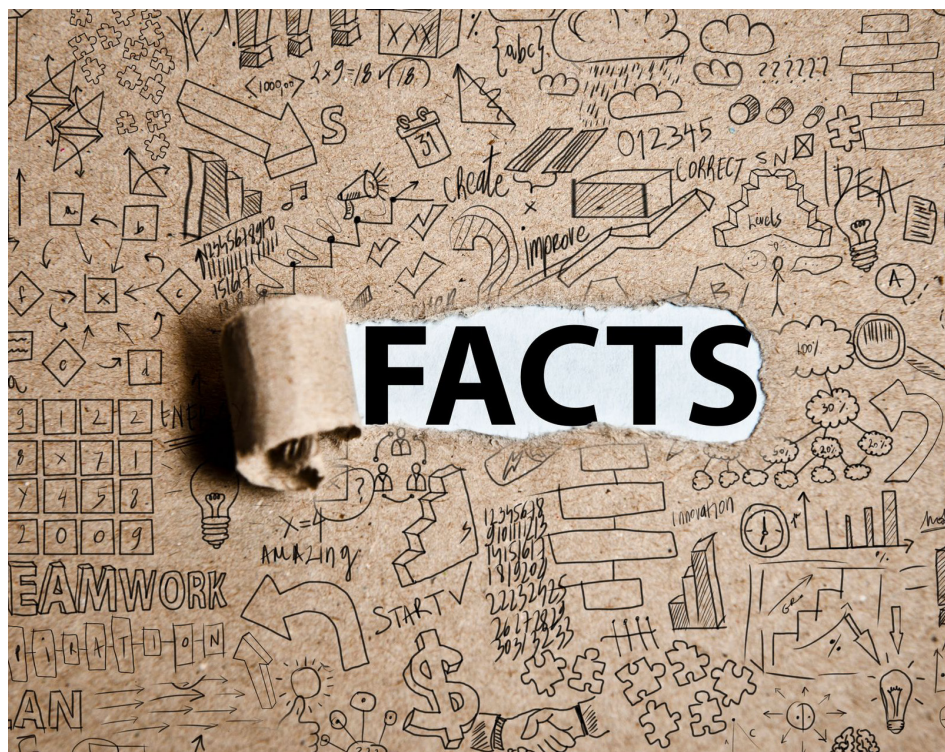
2. TRAINER ELIGIBILITY - To be eligible to vote for, serve as, and remain a member of the Board of Directors as a Trainer representative, a Trainer must run the majority (more than 50%) of their annual race starts in the State of Maryland during each calendar year.

3. RESTRICTING VOTING RIGHTS SO:

- Owner-only members meeting the proposed Owner qualifications could vote only for owner representatives;
- Trainer-only members meeting the proposed Trainer qualifications could vote only for trainer representatives; and
- Qualified Trainer/Owners — a category in which most licensed trainers would fall — could vote for both Owner and Trainer representatives.

4. Requiring the voting counting process to be conducted in-house by the Association although the process has been conducted by an independent third-party since 2014 to ensure transparency.

On March 1, at Mr. Robb's request and with representatives of his choosing present, the Executive Committee met with Mr. Robb and his designees for an extensive four-hour discussion regarding the proposed amendments. Consistent with the understanding reached during that meeting, the Executive Committee agreed to formally present revised proposals for consideration at the next scheduled MTHA Board Meeting on March 19, 2026.



Following considerable discussion at the March 19, 2026 Board Meeting, which was open to all MTHA members, the Board voted to adopt a series of amendments intended to address the concerns that had been raised while still preserving broad participation and representation throughout the Association.

The amendments adopted by the Board included the following:

1. Effective beginning with the 2026 election, owner-only candidates for the Board must hold ownership interests in horses that collectively made at least five (5) Maryland starts during the preceding 365 days.

2. Effective beginning with the 2026 election, trainer-owner candidates must either:

- Have at least 50% of their starts occur in Maryland, or
- Accumulate at least thirty (30) Maryland starts during the preceding 365 days.

The Board unanimously believed these measures appropriately ensured that individuals seeking to serve on the Board maintain meaningful and current participation — or “skin in the game” — in Maryland racing, while avoiding unnecessary restrictions on the broader membership.

At the same meeting, the Board also rejected a proposal to conduct elections “in-house” and instead reaffirmed its long-standing practice of

utilizing an independent third-party election services company to administer Board elections to protect the integrity, independence, and credibility of the election process. At the same time, in an effort to further improve transparency and confidence in future elections, the Board agreed that complete election results and vote totals would be published following future Board of Directors elections.

The Board further unanimously believed that some of the more restrictive proposals under consideration would have fundamentally altered the long-standing balance of representation between owner members and trainer members within the Association.

Notwithstanding these actions taken by the Board to address concerns raised by members, on April 9, 2026, the MTHA received a request for a Special Meeting of the Members submitted by Mr. Robb. This new proposal sought to implement substantially more restrictive bylaw amendments that would not only impose significantly heightened eligibility requirements for individuals seeking to serve on the Board of Directors, but would also dramatically limit, and in many instances eliminate, the voting eligibility of existing MTHA members seeking to participate in Association elections.

Mr. Robb's proposed amendments were as follows:

SECTION 1. OWNER ELIGIBILITY

A member shall be eligible to vote for an Owner Representative or to serve as an Owner Director only if, during the preceding twelve (12) months, such member has owned not less than a twenty-five percent (25%) beneficial interest in one or more thoroughbred horses that have collectively made at least ten (10) official starts in the State of Maryland.

SECTION 2. TRAINER ELIGIBILITY

A member shall be eligible to vote for a Trainer Representative or to serve as a Trainer Director only if, during the preceding twelve (12) months, such member has recorded fifty (50) or more official starts in Maryland, or fifty percent (50%) or more of total starts have occurred in Maryland.

SECTION 3. VOTING STRUCTURE BY CATEGORY

All eligible Owners and Trainers may vote for Owner Representatives. Only eligible Trainers may vote for Trainer Representatives.

SECTION 4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND TRANSPARENCY

All elections shall be administered by an independent third-party election company and results shall be made available to all members.

In simple terms, the newly proposed amendments would not only have severely restricted who could serve on the Board, but also would have totally **ELIMINATED** the voting rights of a substantial percentage of the current membership.

The Board's analysis of 2025 racing data determined that the proposed owner voting thresholds would have reduced voting eligibility to approximately 14% of currently licensed owners, effectively **eliminating voting eligibility** for nearly **86% OF OWNERS** currently able to participate in the election process. Many smaller owners, partnerships, breeders, and long-time Maryland participants would have lost their ability to vote despite remaining actively invested in the future and success of Maryland racing.

Similarly, the proposed trainer thresholds would have reduced voting eligibility to approximately 24% of currently licensed trainers, **eliminating voting eligibility** for roughly **76% OF TRAINERS** currently eligible to participate in Association elections.

Further compounding these restrictions, the proposed structure also would have prohibited the remaining eligible owners from voting for trainer Representatives, creating a system that significantly limited broad membership participation and concentrated voting authority among a much smaller segment of the organization.

At the same time, the Board did recognize that certain provisions of the bylaws relating to member voting rights and election procedures

would benefit from additional clarification. Accordingly, to ensure consistency, transparency, and the protection of members' rights, the Board, with the advice of legal counsel, adopted the following additional bylaw provision:

MEMBER AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other provision of these Bylaws, no alteration, repeal, or adoption of a Bylaw by the Members shall be valid unless it is approved by a majority vote of the entire Membership of the Association at a special meeting of Members called for such purpose".

The Board believes the approach adopted in March appropriately balances the importance of meaningful and active participation in Maryland racing among individuals seeking to serve on the Board, while at the same time **preserving broad, fair, and equitable voting rights and representation** throughout the Association.

More importantly, while both the Board and the membership possess the authority to amend the Bylaws, the Board strongly believes that any proposed amendments affecting voting rights, voting eligibility, or representation on the Board should ultimately be decided by the full membership through a vote of the entire membership body.

Accordingly, in response to the request for a Special Meeting of the Members, the Board has agreed to call and conduct such a meeting, provided the process complies with the Association's Bylaws and applicable Maryland law.

Questions have been raised regarding the requirement that the costs associated with the Special Meeting be paid by those requesting it. Under Maryland corporate law, including the provisions governing nonprofit corporations such as the MTHA, members requesting a special meeting are responsible for the reasonably estimated costs associated with preparing and mailing the official notice of meeting to the membership. Because a vote on proposed bylaw amendments by the membership requires polling the entire membership, the cost of conducting the process is comparable to a full Association election.

Consistent with all Association elections conducted since 2014, the MTHA will utilize an independent third-party election services company to distribute notices, collect proxies from members who choose to vote by proxy, and tabulate all votes in order to ensure transparency, integrity, and fairness throughout the process. Every eligible member will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed amendments either in person or by proxy.

The members requesting the Special Meeting have been advised of the estimated costs associated with conducting the meeting. Upon receipt of those funds, the Association will proceed with issuing notice, holding the meeting, and conducting the vote.

Unfortunately, rather than continuing to engage with the Board through the Association's internal governance process, Mr. Robb has now filed litigation against the Association in furtherance of his objectives. The Association believes the lawsuit contains significant factual inaccuracies and asserts claims that are without merit, and the Association intends to vigorously defend both itself and the actions taken by the Board.

It is regrettable that at a time when Maryland racing must remain focused on working together to strengthen and preserve the industry — and maintain the confidence and continued support of the State of Maryland — the Association is instead being forced to devote substantial time, attention, and financial resources toward internal division and litigation.

The Board of Directors also has a fiduciary obligation to act in the best interests of the Association and its membership as a whole. Throughout this process, the Board has acted under the guidance of independent legal counsel working in conjunction with the Association's General Counsel as an additional safeguard to ensure that all actions taken are appropriate, consistent with the Association's Bylaws, compliant with Maryland nonprofit corporate law, and in the best interests of Maryland racing and the membership at large.

Members with questions or concerns regarding the proposed bylaw amendments are encouraged to attend an open bi-monthly meeting of the MTHA Board of Directors. The last meeting was held on May 27 at Laurel Park. The next meeting will be posted online at mdhorsemen.com and published in the Horsemen's Happenings email Newsletter.

Board of Directors

A. Ferris Allen, III
R. Thomas Bowman
Lacey A. Gaudet
Linda S. Gaudet
David Hayden
JoAnn Hayden
Michael F. Horning
Timothy L. Keefe
H. Graham Motion
Joseph P. Pons, Jr.
Charles J. Reed
Brittany T. Russell
Michael J. Trombetta
Katharine M. Voss
David H. Wade

board@mdhorsemen.com

KY Derby-winning trainer and MTHA Board member H. Graham Motion:



“Our Board works incredibly hard to encourage participation, listen to differing viewpoints, and make decisions that are in the best interests of Maryland racing and the entire horsemen’s community. Horsemen from all corners of the state are dependent on one another to make this work.”

Maryland leading trainer and MTHA Board member Brittany Russell:



“I wish those who seek to divide Maryland’s racing community would focus instead on being constructive and productive members as we work through the serious challenges facing our industry. The Board listened to them and recognized some changes were warranted and others were ill-advised. The only way we move forward successfully is by working together, finding common ground, and supporting one another”

MTHA Board member Michael J. Trombetta:



“Our Board is committed to an open process and encouraging creative thinking and new ideas. We’d love new folks to step up and constructively contribute to help us shape the industry’s future. We welcome help. Resorting to old, tired tactics intending to divide and conquer is not the way forward.”

➔ Bonuses, Continued

that period, Maryland-breds finishing first, second, or third in eligible overnight races at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park will earn points toward a share of the bonus pool. Stakes races, certified races, and state-bred restricted races are excluded from the program.

As in 2025, bonuses will be awarded through a points-based system that mirrors Maryland purse levels and race conditions. Horses will accumulate points based on both the level of the race and their finishing position, with each horse’s share of the bonus pool determined by its total points earned during the promotional period. Bonus payments will continue to be divided equally between owners and developers, with a developer defined as the owner of record at the time of the horse’s first career start. Starter Handicap races will once again receive points equivalent to two claiming levels higher.

The program serves as an extension of Maryland’s year-round Maryland-Bred Owner & Developer Bonus Program conducted at Laurel Park, Pimlico Race Course, and Timonium Race Course, where Maryland-breds earn purse bonuses for finishing first, second, or third in eligible races. Together, these programs are designed to reward investment in Maryland breeding while encouraging owners and trainers to continue campaigning Maryland-breds throughout the region.

Last year’s inaugural summer program exceeded expectations, with nearly 200 Maryland-bred horses earning bonus money while competing at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park. The strong participation demonstrated both the popularity of the program and the competitiveness of Maryland-breds racing throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

The MTHA encourages all owners and trainers with Maryland-breds to take advantage of this expanded opportunity again in 2026 and continue showcasing the strength of Maryland breeding during the summer racing season.

Level	Categories	MD Purse	Points for 1st-2nd-3rd
A	No price; CLM \$50K & Up	\$47K & Up	10 pts. 5 pts. 2.5 pts.
B	CLM \$30K - \$45K	\$33K - \$41K	8 pts. 4 pts. 2 pts.
C	CLM \$16K - \$25K	\$26K - \$30K	6 pts. 3 pts. 1.5 pts.
D	CLM \$6K - \$12,500	\$15,500 - \$24K	4 pts. 2 pts. 1 pt.