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Media Release  
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***Australian StrideMASTER® technology brings world first welfare initiative to US racetracks***

A non-invasive screening system that identifies horses at risk of musculoskeletal injury developed by Australian company StrideMASTER® and Kentucky-based Equine Analysis Systems will be used on all New York Racing Association (NYRA) racetracks for the rest of this year and throughout 2022.

StrideSAFE® was unveiled in the US in late 2020 with a proof-of-concept trial at the Emerald Downs racetrack in Washington State, in conjunction with Washington State University.

The Emerald Downs trial followed an intensive period of product development where StrideSAFE's proprietary algorithms were retrospectively tested against data captured from both US and Australian racetracks.

In July 2021, NYRA conducted a trial of the technology at Saratoga, and following the success of the trial the system was adopted for the current Belmont meet and will be used at Aqueduct over winter.

Every horse competing on a NYRA racetrack will now carry the StrideSAFE® sensor.

At the end of each NYRA race day, StrideSAFE® reports are sent to the Equine Medical Director at the New York State Gaming Commission.

Dr Scott Palmer, the New York State Equine Medical Director and Adjunct Professor of Population Medicine & Diagnostic Sciences at Cornell University, said horses that experienced catastrophic injury often had pre-existing injuries.

“Horses that break down appear to be sound at the trot in pre-race inspections, making it difficult to identify at risk horses through normal observational techniques,” he said.

“StrideSAFE® is truly groundbreaking technology because it provides us with an objective and practical screening tool that can help identify horses at increased risk for catastrophic injury in time for us to intervene.

“In the relatively short time we have been using the system we have already managed to correlate red flags from the StrideSAFE® system with abnormal pre-race inspection findings and some high-speed exercise anomalies and injuries.”

As part of an arrangement to support ongoing research at Cornell University, StrideSAFE® will share data collected from NYRA racetracks with the team at Cornell Ruffian Equine Specialists.

Dr David Lambert, StrideSAFE CEO and President of Equine Analysis Systems in Kentucky, said each horse had its own unique way of moving, producing power and creating force.

“A large animal like a horse cannot run as fast as it does without involving stored elastic energy in the structures of its hind legs,” he said.

“The timing of the loading and unloading of these structures is critical to smooth and safe galloping. Often, low-level injuries which have been going on for a long time prior to a breakdown cannot be seen or felt by the trainer or rider.

“At the gallop, the horse is moving too quickly to exhibit changes recognisable to the naked eye.”

The StrideSAFE® sensor, carried in the saddle cloth of the horse, tracks the horse’s movement continuously and collects more than 2,000 high-precision readings per second.

“When any measurement exceeds critical limits, we flag those horses for further clinical assessment by the veterinary team,” Dr Lambert said.

Because of the cost-effective, non-invasive nature of the system, every horse in every race can be easily monitored, enabling screening of the entire participant horse population.

A significant benefit is that only those horses that are identified as being at risk of injury need to be subjected to further diagnostic procedures such as full-body scintigraphy.

For David Hawke, Managing Director of Australian-based StrideMASTER®, it brings to fruition the long-held objective of developing technologies that help reduce the number of horse fatalities and make racing safer for jockeys.

“We’ve long held the view that if we were ever to improve the welfare outcomes for racehorses and riders, we had to find a way to measure racehorses while they were racing,” he said.

When launched in 2011, StrideMASTER was the first raceday data system to capture detailed biometric data from horses during races.

“We now have the largest database of biometric data on racing thoroughbreds in the world,” Mr Hawke said.

“Nearly every mainstream professional sport collects biometric data on their athletes. That data is used to manage athlete performance, development and their welfare.

“After analysing years of data these sports know when athletes are more likely to suffer a season ending injury and this information is used to inform actions such as when to interchange players to keep them safe.”

The New York Racing Association now joins the fraternity of other professional sports in applying modern data capture tools to managing the welfare of their equine athletes.

“With racing under intense scrutiny, it is incumbent on the industry to make racing safer and this should include harnessing the power of cutting-edge technologies,” Mr Hawke said.

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