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March 26, 2009

News Release

ORC announces \$26.2 million Standardbred Improvement Program for 2009

Toronto, ON – At its meeting on March 25, 2009, the Governing Board of the Ontario Racing Commission (ORC) approved the \$26.2 million budget for the 2009 Standardbred Horse Improvement Program. This approval provides for increased purses for the 2009 Ontario Sires Stakes Program (OSS), future enhancements to the rewards program for Ontario Bred racehorses, and the establishment of 2011 Ontario Sired awards payable to breeders of successful racehorses competing in the OSS.

In announcing the 2009 Program, ORC Chair Rod Seiling noted the importance of maintaining incentives for the purchase of quality Ontario racehorses. “The Horse Improvement Program is designed to encourage increased production of quality Ontario Bred and Ontario Sired racehorses, and we are committed to maintaining Program incentives to encourage the purchase of our quality racing stock.”

Highlights of the 2009 program include:

- An increase in purses for Grassroots Divisions of the OSS program to \$24,000 per division
- An increase in purses for Grassroots Finals to \$100,000 per final
- An increase in purses for Gold Finals to \$130,000
- Continuation of the Breeder Rewards and Ontario Breeder Bonus for 2009 (and 2010)

In part, changes to the purse allocations for the Ontario Sires Stakes program have been funded through the elimination of the Gold Consolation Races for 2009. “Participation in the Gold Consolation program in 2008 was much lower than expected,” said Seiling. “In the current business climate we felt that the available funds in the Standardbred Improvement Program budget would be better spent on increasing purses for the OSS finals and Grassroots Divisions to encourage the purchase of Ontario Sired horses and expand participation in the Program.”

The Ontario Resident Mare Program has started this year for foals of 2009. To qualify as an Ontario Resident Mare, a mare must be resident in the province of Ontario for 180 consecutive days surrounding date of foaling in Ontario. Offspring of Ontario Resident

Mares will be eligible to be registered as “Ontario Bred” horses, and will be eligible for incentives attached to their Ontario Bred status. For 2009, mare registration will remain open until September 1, 2009. Further details on this program will be released over the next few weeks.

The ORC has announced that Ontario Sired Rewards will be continued under the OSS Program. This change is in response to industry feedback on last year’s announcements that would have eliminated rewards for foals out of any mares that did not meet the mare residency requirements. The Program will now reward mare owners under two separate programs, one, for keeping their mares in the province as Ontario Resident Mares (Ontario Bred Rewards), and the second, for using Ontario Sires in their breeding programs (Ontario Sired Rewards). It should be noted that a mare owner may be eligible to receive both rewards if all requirements are met. Starting in 2011, Rewards will be available as follows:

Ontario Sired Rewards:

- Breeders of OSS purse winning horses will be eligible for rewards equal to 5% of the horse’s total purse earnings in OSS races.

Ontario Bred Rewards:

- Ontario Breds racing in the 2011 OSS program (foals of 2009 out of Ontario Resident Mares) will earn rewards for mare owners equal to 15% of the horse’s total purse earnings in OSS races.
- Ontario Breds racing in 2011 will also be eligible for rewards on purses won in selected “Open” stakes races in Ontario.

“While the Standardbred Industry has experienced declines in wagering in recent years, we are pleased to see an increase in wagering in the first part of this year” said Seiling. “We are committed to an annual review and planning process for the Standardbred Improvement Program that works with industry to realize the maximum possible benefit for the breeding sector from Program expenditures. Investment in the Ontario breeding sector is key to the success of the Ontario Racing Industry, and the Standardbred Improvement Program is the mechanism by which we can encourage investment in the sector. That is the basis on which we are moving forward with this important program for Ontario.”

Ontario’s Horse Improvement Program contributes to the health and sustainability of the horse racing and breeding community in the province, through a series of programs such as funding of stakes races, the Ontario Sires Stakes, incentives to owners and breeders, and equine research. The ORC is entrusted by the government and the industry to oversee and administer the program.

John L. Blakney
Executive Director

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Fact Sheet

Standardbred Horse Improvement Program 2009

Enhanced Ontario Breeders Rewards Program – valued at 15% of OSS purses.

- During 2008, 2009 and 2010, Breeders Rewards will continue to be paid in the following manner: 7% of purses earned will be paid to all breeders, and 8% will be paid as the Ontario Breeders' Bonus.
- Starting in 2011, all breeders of OSS purse winning horses will be eligible for rewards equal to 5% of OSS purses won. Ontario Bred horses (out of Ontario Resident Mares) will be eligible for additional rewards equal to 15% of OSS purses earned.
- Starting in 2011, Ontario Bred horses will also earn awards for purses won in selected Open stakes races in Ontario.

Launch of the Ontario Resident Mare Program for foals of 2009

- The goal of the Ontario Resident Mare Program is to encourage investment in Ontario, and maintain quality stallions and mares in the Ontario breeding sector as competitive programs develop in neighbouring jurisdictions.
- Starting in 2011, the Ontario Bred Rewards will be available for eligible horses as outlined above.

Ontario Sires Stakes 2009 Purse Structure

- Guaranteed purses of:
 - \$24,000 per Grassroots Division
 - Grassroots Semi-Finals \$30,000 and Grassroots Finals \$100,000
 - \$40,000 per Gold Elimination
 - \$130,000 per Gold Final
 - \$300,000 per Gold Super Final
 - The Gold Consolation program has been cancelled for 2009

Cancellation of the Trillium Series, at the end of 2009

- The Trillium Series Program will continue to be funded for eligible three-year olds in 2009, which is the last year in which the Trillium Series will receive funding from the Standardbred Horse Improvement Program.

Equitable cost-sharing of HIP between tracks

- The new cost-sharing funding formula launched in 2008, will be applied for the 2009 Program year.

Allocations for Equine Research and Promotion of the OSS remain unchanged

- The HIP will continue to contribute 1% of the wagering levy received to Equine Research. Currently the ORC makes the research dollars available to Equine Guelph for research that is peer reviewed and approved by stakeholder representatives.

Further information about the Program Changes will be communicated to participants over the course of the next few months. If you have any comments or questions, please direct them to:

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