

Robert M. Beck Jr., Chair  
Kentucky Horse Racing Authority  
4063 Ironworks Pkwy., Bldg. B  
Lexington, KY 40511

Two pages via fax: 859-246-2039

Dear Mr. Beck,

In the wake of filly Eight Belles' breakdown and euthanasia at Saturday's Kentucky Derby, we are calling on the Horse Racing Authority to institute broad reforms to prevent future tragedies.

First, however, we urge the Authority to suspend the license of jockey Gabriel Saez, pending an inquiry into the circumstances of the breakdown. Eight Belles was doubtlessly injured before the finish line, yet Saez whipped her repeatedly in the home stretch.

Eight Belles is only the latest of many horses to have suffered catastrophic injuries in the races of the Triple Crown. Union City, Prairie Bayou, George Washington, and Barbaro are the most famous champions whose still-maturing bones snapped while pounding the hard dirt surfaces. Thousands of other lesser-known horses have met with similar fates on tracks throughout the country.

There are steps that can be taken right now to minimize the risk:

- 1) Thoroughbreds shouldn't be trained or raced before their third birthday at the earliest. Before this, they are physically immature, and the pounding that their legs take leads to catastrophic injuries.
- 2) Mandate synthetic track surfaces or turf racing exclusively at every racecourse. While the dirt surface translates into speed, it also causes injury. At courses where synthetic surfaces have replaced dirt, the drop in the number of breakdowns has been dramatic. As Keeneland has already made this switch, a precedent has already been set in Kentucky.
- 3) Limit the number of races per season. Even Barbaro, who was lightly raced before his easy victory in the Kentucky Derby, wasn't protected from injury. Those horses who live at and race on the smaller tracks are often run so frequently that strains and breaks are inevitable. The variety of drugs legally given to racehorses to mask the symptoms and reduce the swelling and pain of



**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

501 FRONT ST.  
NORFOLK, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA  
757-622-0457 (FAX)

PETA.org  
Info@peta.org

AN INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATION DEDICATED  
TO PROTECTING  
THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

injured legs is further evidence that recovery time between races is not always sufficient.

4) Ban whipping. Horses suffering an injury during a race will keep going until their bones are completely shattered because they are being mercilessly whipped by jockeys. If horses truly “love to run,” as the racing industry continually claims, they will run without being beaten.

While these sweeping changes would require, at least temporarily, an upheaval of Kentucky’s racing industry, we believe it is in the industry’s best interests to begin the process now. Compassionate people will not tolerate for long a sport whose champions end up lying dead in the dirt.

May I hear from you at your earliest convenience? You can contact me at 757-622-7382.

Sincerely,

Ingrid E. Newkirk  
President



**PETA**

**PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS**

501 FRONT ST.  
NORFOLK, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA  
757-622-0457 (FAX)

PETA.org  
Info@peta.org

AN INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATION DEDICATED  
TO PROTECTING  
THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS