

October 14, 2026

Horse Racing Alberta
Suite 720, 9707 110 St NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2L9

Dear Members of the Regulatory & Licensing Committee,

Re: Support for an Amendment to Mandate CCTV Surveillance at Alberta racetracks

I am a resident of Calgary, Alberta and am a Senior Staff Lawyer at Animal Justice, Canada's leading animal law organization. I write on behalf of Animal Justice in support of amendments to the Rules Governing Horse Racing in Alberta (the "Rules") that would require continuous video surveillance ("CCTV") in horse housing and handling areas at Alberta racetracks.

Although the Rules prohibit animal cruelty, mistreatment in barns and other areas outside public view may go undetected. Inspections and security patrols cannot capture every interaction with a horse. Mandatory video surveillance would help deter abuse and provide evidence for investigations when incidents occur.

The abuse documented at Assiniboia Downs in Winnipeg demonstrates the need for these measures. In May 2026, Animal Justice released whistleblower footage recorded in July 2023 showing a jockey grabbing a mare, Scarlett's Flower, by the throat, repeatedly striking her face, and whipping her with her own headgear. An employee captured the incident inside the barn. Animal cruelty charges were subsequently stayed, and the jockey entered into a one-year peace bond that expressly allowed him to continue working with animals.¹ Publicly available racing information shows that the individual involved in the Assiniboia Downs incident is now working with horses at a Century racetrack in Alberta, reinforcing the need for mandatory CCTV surveillance in horse housing and handling areas outside public view.

CCTV coverage should extend inside stalls and all other areas where horses are handled, with sufficient lighting and image quality to allow officials to identify misconduct. It should also mandate a retention period and prompt access to footage by authorized Horse Racing Alberta ("HRA") officials. Police and animal welfare enforcement authorities should also be able to promptly obtain relevant footage when investigating suspected animal cruelty. Recordings relevant to a complaint or suspected violation should be preserved beyond that period until the matter is resolved.

¹ See: <https://animaljustice.ca/media-releases/whistleblower-video-of-jockey-beating-horse-at-assiniboia-downs-shows-need-for-video-monitoring>

In addition to requiring equipment resistant to tampering, the Rules should expressly prohibit anyone from intentionally disabling or obstructing a camera, interfering with the surveillance system, or altering or destroying footage required to be retained.

Animal Justice respectfully urges HRA to adopt CCTV requirements as part of its 2027 Rule Change Process. These measures would strengthen enforcement of the existing animal welfare rules and help protect horses from abuse.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'APester', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Alexandra Pester
Senior Staff Lawyer
Animal Justice