



Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association

15 Spinning Wheel Road
Suite 432
Hinsdale, IL. 60521
www.harnessillinois.com

630-323-0808 (Main)
630-323-0761 (Fax)
800-572-0213 (Toll-Free)

“Nothing in life, that's worth having, comes easy”

Could truer words have ever been spoken, specifically as it pertains to the current state of the horse racing industry in Illinois? Yes, we all expected that 2022 would be our break-out year. Yet, here we are again, still waiting for the opportunity to race year round for increased purse money that will allow us to prosper.

The Good:

Hawthorne is committed to horse racing and worked hard with both horsemen's groups to come up with an amicable schedule for 2022. For this year, both breeds must share the only upstate racetrack available. It's certainly not perfect for us or the thoroughbred horsemen, or Hawthorne but a sincere compromise was agreed upon by everyone involved.

We have met with the leaders of Hawthorne and their construction plan for the “racino” is impressive. Unlike other racinos recently built around the country that treat the racetrack and its fans like an afterthought this puts horse racing front and center. As promised, it will not only highlight Illinois horse racing but will emphasize it.

Racing opportunities have increased from 63 live racing days in 2021 to 85 live days in 2022. 75 days of racing at Hawthorne and ten additional days of racing at the Springfield State Fairgrounds. (Not including the two state fairs) Our schedule at Hawthorne for 2022 will be: Three days a week (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) from January 7 to January 30. Then four days a week (Thursday – Sunday) from February 3 through March 20. We start back at Hawthorne on Thursday, June 30 and then three days a week, July 1 through September 11.

We will also race full cards this year at the Springfield State Fairgrounds. We will race four days in mid to late June. Date and time still to be determined and six days over the final three weeks in September, dates and times still to be determined. These racing days at the Fairgrounds will be very similar to the cards hosted by Hawthorne. They will have both a mix of Illinois-Bred races and overnight races. Purses will be the same as they would be if raced at Hawthorne. Those days are in addition to the traditional State Fairs held at Springfield and DuQuoin.

We passed a breeding bill that will take away some of the previous restrictions on the ownership of an Illinois registered stallion. This will allow us to expedite the quality of our stallions.

Through the legislative process, we were able to garner \$1.7 million from a surplus of money within the IRB budget reserves to supplement next year's purses.

The Frustrating:

Churchill Downs ceases racing at Arlington Park. This was not unexpected but certainly a harsh reality of conglomerate gaming companies and how they feel about horse racing. This directly impacts us because now there is only one upstate racetrack to race both breeds.

For a myriad of different reasons, construction has been delayed at Hawthorne. Over a year ago, they began tearing down and prepping the structure for the new facility but then delays with licensing and financing occurred. We are assured that construction will start back up early in 2022 and be completed by early 2023.

The much talked about second racetrack is still not a reality. Again, for reasons beyond our control, the specific site and ownership has not been established. Hawthorne leaders have reiterated to us that they will be significant players in the second racino but currently they report that they need to concentrate on getting the construction at their Stickney facility up and headed in the right direction before turning their full attention to the second one.

Moving forward, as you see, our work at the IHHA continues on. Although, we jumped a big hurdle in getting gaming legislation passed two years ago, we are still a year off from reaping any of the benefits. So, all we can do and will do is keep pressing. With an early January start to the year, it's important that you return this membership form as soon as possible. Thank you.

