



PA Horse Breeders Donate \$150,000 to Penn Vet New Bolton Center for Biomarker, Blood Doping Research

KENNETT SQUARE, PA (March 1, 2021) – The Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association (PHBA) announced today a \$150,000 donation to the Equine Pharmacology Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine’s (Penn Vet) New Bolton Center that will support continued revolutionary research in equine biomarkers.

The new round of PHBA funding – which will expand on the cutting-edge research that [the PHBA helped to fund in 2018](#) - will bolster three key research initiatives focused on improving the health and safety of equine athletes and enhancing integrity in racing. One area of research seeks to identify novel mRNA biomarkers that can help proactively predict if a horse is at risk for injury, even for injuries that are difficult or impossible to detect using conventional methods. Ultimately, researchers hope to develop a rapid stall-side blood test that could be administered prior to a race, helping racing officials accurately detect horses that may be at an elevated risk.

The funding will also support Penn Vet’s sample collection for continued development of an Equine Biological Passport through the expansion of the Equine Pharmacology Laboratory’s BioBank. Samples from the BioBank are analyzed to determine baseline levels of blood-based biomarkers found in racehorses. Once established, these baseline levels can be used to determine if blood samples taken from a horse pre- or post-race show any variations from baseline indicative of illness, injury or prohibited substances.

“The PHBA is very proud to continue its partnership with Penn Vet by providing an additional grant of \$150,000 to fund this incredibly important and timely research program,” said Deanna Manfredi, PhD, a member of the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association’s Board of Directors. “This research program has the potential to have a very positive impact on the sport we all love and ensure its continued success through advances in preventing breakdowns, promoting equine health, and enhancing racing integrity.”

“Studies are ongoing to develop an Equine Biological Passport using a variety of biomarkers,” said Dr. Mary Robinson, Director of the Equine Pharmacology Laboratory at New Bolton Center. “For example, we now have potential protein and mRNA biomarkers of extracorporeal shockwave therapy that are being investigated using our Equine Biobank samples. This work would not have been possible without the support of the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association, who have provided the funding to expand and maintain the Equine Biobank, and the support of the Pennsylvania State Horse Racing Commission for my laboratory.”

“I’m proud to see the continued collaboration between the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association and New Bolton Center. This partnership promotes integrity and safety in the horse racing industry,” said State Representative Christina Sappey, who represents the 158th State House District. “The highly advanced research developed by Penn Vet’s New Bolton Center is critically important to protect equine athletes, and PHBA’s generous support makes this possible.

We're fortunate to have both of these organizations that benefit all Pennsylvanians here in the 158th!"

In addition to the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association's support, Penn Vet's New Bolton Center is also seeking additional funding to further expand and accelerate this research program. Individuals or organizations who would like to support the program through a financial donation are encouraged to contact Margaret Leardi, Director of Development for New Bolton Center, at mleardi@vet.upenn.edu.

About the PHBA

The Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association (PHBA) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1948 that advocates on behalf of Pennsylvania's Thoroughbred breeding industry. The PHBA is responsible for all aspects of the Pennsylvania Breeding Fund, the official registration, marketing, and promotion of Pennsylvania-Bred thoroughbred race horses, as well as the maintenance of the official registry of PA-Bred race horses and Pennsylvania stallions. The PHBA provides a number of services to its members, including informational assistance, educational opportunities, and a variety of members-only social events.

About Penn Vet

Ranked among the top ten veterinary schools worldwide, the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine (Penn Vet) is a global leader in veterinary education, research, and clinical care. Founded in 1884, Penn Vet is the first veterinary school developed in association with a medical school. The school is a proud member of the One Health initiative, linking human, animal, and environmental health.

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