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Contact: [Lee.Park@gaming.ny.gov](mailto:Lee.Park@gaming.ny.gov)

**NEW YORK STATE GAMING COMMISSION LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT OF RACE HORSES BY TRAINER STEVE ASMUSSEN, ASSISTANT TRAINER SCOTT BLASI AND OTHER LICENSED INDIVIDUALS**

The New York State Gaming Commission has undertaken a formal investigation into allegations of abuse and mistreatment of thoroughbred race horses in New York State by licensed individuals. The investigation was initiated after the Commission was provided undercover evidence of alleged violations by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

“The allegations and footage provided by PETA are extremely troubling and we are fully investigating the matter,” said Robert Williams, Acting Executive Director of the New York State Gaming Commission. “PETA has offered to assist the Commission in its investigation, and we welcome such cooperation. We expect that all other parties involved will be forthcoming as well. If the results of our investigation find that licensed individuals violated the State’s laws and rules, the Commission will consider all options.”

On Tuesday, March 18, PETA provided the New York State Gaming Commission with evidence and materials requesting an investigation into the conduct of several currently licensed individuals who participated in New York horse racing at Saratoga Race Course in July and August 2013. The individuals identified by PETA include: trainer Steve Asmussen, assistant trainer Scott Blasi, KDE Equine, LLC d/b/a Steve Asmussen Racing Stables, attending veterinarians Dr. Joseph F. Migliacci and Dr. James Hunt, and jockey Ricardo Santana, Jr.

The Commission initiated an investigation on March 18 and will obtain and review all footage documenting the allegations. The Office of Veterinary Affairs, led by Equine Medical Director Scott E. Palmer, VMD, is assisting in the investigation.

“The behavior depicted in the undercover video and supporting materials is disturbing and disgusting,” said Dr. Palmer. “We are working to determine what happened and ensure that proper protocols are put in place to prevent such actions from taking place again.”

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