

Agriculturally Speaking... Michigan's Horse Racing Tradition Continues
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If you haven't experienced the thrill of watching a speeding horse cross the finish line, now is the perfect time to check out one of the state's family entertainment treasures. Throughout the month of June, we will be celebrating Michigan Horse Racing Month and all of the wonderful things it encompasses. Additionally, we are commemorating the 75th anniversary of pari-mutuel horse racing in Michigan.

Horse racing is inextricably linked to Michigan agriculture with our state being home to several hundred racing-breed horse farms with thousands of acres of land solely dedicated to the 5,700 race horses with the racing breeds of Quarter Horse, American Paint, Arabian and Standardbred being the most numerous breeds in all of Michigan equine.

Not only is horse racing steeped in Michigan history, but it's good for the economy too. Horse racing reaches far beyond the grandstands. It's a labor intensive industry providing jobs - both on and off the tracks - for trainers, drivers, jockeys, blacksmiths, grooms, veterinarians, racing officials, pari-mutuel clerks, guards, admission clerks, concessions workers, and more.

Michigan's horse racing industry continues to have a positive impact on the state's economy. Revenue is generated for state coffers through personal income and property tax, the Michigan Business Tax as well as the wagering tax, which is unique to the horse racing industry. In 2007, the industry generated \$8.4 million through the simulcast wagering tax for Michigan's economy.

When horse racing first began in September of 1933, there were 31 days of thoroughbred racing at the Michigan State Fairgrounds track in Detroit, attracted more than 100,000 fans wagering approximately \$3.5 million, and generated close to \$125,000 dollars in state wagering tax.

Today, Michigan has six licensed pari-mutuel racetracks across the state. There are four harness racetracks - Hazel Park Harness Raceway, Northville Downs, Jackson Harness Raceway, and Sports Creek Raceway. There is one mixed breed track - Mount Pleasant Meadows, and one thoroughbred track - Pinnacle Race Course.

In 2007, Michigan's racetracks held a total of 1,935 days of live and simulcast racing, and attracted 1 million fans who wagered more than \$260 million. Throughout the month, Hazel Park, Jackson Harness Raceway, and Mount Pleasant Meadows are running live races with the other two harness tracks offering only simulcast broadcasts. Pinnacle Race Course will be opening in mid-July.

Additionally, the Office of the Racing Commissioner (ORC) licensed approximately 4,500 individuals to participate at some level in pari-mutuel horse racing; 3,500 of these licensees permanently reside in Michigan. ORC is the official state agency charged with regulating, promoting and serving the horse racing industry in Michigan.

Horse racing has been an important asset to Michigan's economy and to its social culture for 75 years. With five tracks in operation and a brand new race track set to open within weeks, Michigan horse racing is here for another 75 years! But don't wait that long - come experience the thrill and excitement of horse racing in Michigan.

For more information about Michigan horse racing, Michigan's race tracks and live racing schedules, visit www.michigan.gov/horseracing.

