

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack Closed Indefinitely Following Horse Injuries

Officials suspend racing at Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack as investigations into multiple horse injuries continue, with experts assessing track conditions, implementing veterinary inspections, and enhancing safety protocols.

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The V.I. Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation announced on Friday that the Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack in St. Thomas has been temporarily closed as investigations continue into multiple horse injuries sustained during races on December 22, 2024.

The decision, announced in conjunction with the St. Thomas/St. John Horse Racing Commission (STT/STJ HRC), comes as officials assess whether the condition of the racing surface contributed to the incidents.

In the joint statement, DSPR and STT/STJ HRC confirmed that the track will be inaccessible to trainers and jockeys until further notice. While the stables will remain open, no races will be held at the facility during the evaluation process.

The [December 22](#) race day saw multiple horses sustain injuries, with some collapsing on the track. Emergency personnel, including ambulance teams, responded to assist both the animals and their jockeys. Concerned about the safety of future races, STT/STJ HRC launched an immediate review of the circumstances surrounding the incidents.

On January 12, DSPR acknowledged receipt of a formal letter from STT/STJ HRC detailing the injuries and outlining necessary steps to address safety concerns. The commission said it has since engaged in discussions with trainers, jockeys, veterinarians, and track personnel to identify contributing factors. Preliminary findings suggest that pre-existing injuries, horse age and health, medication use, and the condition of the racing surface may have played a role in the incidents.

To ensure the safety of both horses and jockeys, STT/STJ HRC has committed to a series of comprehensive safety measures, including:

- **Racing Surface Evaluation:** Experts will thoroughly assess the track conditions to determine if surface irregularities contributed to the injuries. No races will be scheduled until this evaluation is complete.
- **Veterinary Inspections:** Horses will undergo detailed veterinary examinations on race day. Any horse deemed unfit will not be allowed to compete.
- **Safety Procedure Enhancements:** The commission will collaborate with safety officers from other U.S. tracks to refine protocols and implement best practices.

Additionally, the commission said it has advocated for reinstating anti-doping regulations to improve medication oversight. The near-completion of the track's testing barn—currently more than 85% finished—will facilitate these efforts.

DSPR and STT/STJ HRC have assured the public of their dedication to maintaining a safe and competitive racing environment. DSPR stated that updates will be shared with the public as the investigation progresses and necessary repairs or modifications are made.

"We appreciate the public's cooperation during this time, which will allow us to assess and repair the surface as needed," the department stated. DSPR has encouraged those with questions or concerns to reach out to their office for more information.

As the investigation continues, STT/STJ HRC said it is working closely with stakeholders, including horse owners, trainers, and jockeys, to ensure a fair and sustainable racing

environment. Chairman Hugo Hodge Jr. and Vice-Chairman Dr. Laura Palminteri reiterated that the safety of both human and equine participants remains the commission's top priority.

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