

Ask the Vet

By Jeff A. Blea, DVM

What is the function of the SCEF, and are there any plans for a new equine hospital in Southern California?

The Southern California Equine Foundation (SCEF) is a 501, C-3 non-profit organization that provides full service equine hospital facilities on the backside at both Santa Anita and Hollywood Park. These hospitals serve as the “Gold Standard” for veterinary care at a racetrack. The primary objective of the SCEF, which was established at its inception in the 1970’s, is to serve as a “Charitable Organization Dedicated to the Care of the Injured Horse,” and that objective continues today.

The SCEF is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of owners, trainers, veterinarians, and industry representatives. Its sister organization, the Dolly Green Research Foundation, which serves to fund equine research, advancements in equine care, and other programs that benefit the Thoroughbred racehorse, is governed by the same seven-member Board of Directors. Karen Klawitter, hospital administrator, oversees day-to-day operations of the SCEF/DGRF.

Membership of the SCEF consists of the veterinarians involved in the care of the Thoroughbred racehorse, as well as, owners, trainers, and any licensee who is approved by a majority vote of the membership at the annual meeting. The hospital staff consists of seven full time technicians who are trained in surgery, laboratory sciences, radiology, and nuclear scintigraphy.

Currently the SCEF offers a comprehensive array of diagnostic and surgical services to the veterinary community, and more importantly to the horses and horsemen. Each facility includes a surgical suite, with induction and recovery rooms that are used for orthopedic and soft-tissue surgeries. Both tracks have second-generation Fuji CR systems that are unparalleled in equine radiology.

Wayne Ho, the laboratory director of the DGRF Lab at Hollywood Park, provides comprehensive laboratory and clinical pathology services to the veterinary community. Nuclear scintigraphy has completed close to 7,000 nuclear

scans since its inception, and has proven to be a valuable diagnostic tool in reducing injuries.

Currently, the equine hospital at Santa Anita – which is actually a mobile home that was set up in the 1970’s – is in desperate need of renovation. Consequently, the SCEF board and the membership have been carefully crafting plans to build a new equine hospital to replace the original structure. The current plan includes a two-story building at its present location, and envisions the lab moving over to Santa Anita. A water recovery system, as used with Barbaro, is also under consideration. Current management at Santa Anita is working with SCEF to help identify key construction issues that may affect the new facility. According to SCEF principals, Santa Anita’s commitment to building this new facility has been invaluable.

Building codes and permits represent obstacles that most certainly will be encountered. However, the real challenge facing SCEF will be funding construction of the new equine hospital at Santa Anita. Oak Tree Racing Association has generously committed substantial funding, and many private donors within the industry continue to actively show their support. Yet, there remains a multitude of rivers to cross before building of the new equine hospital at Santa Anita commences.

Rest assured, however, that the Southern California Equine Foundation will continue to provide innovative services and leadership in the care of the Thoroughbred racehorse well into the future.

Dr. Jeff Blea is the co-managing partner of the VonBluecher, Prida, and Blea Inc. equine practice. He currently serves as president of the Southern California Equine Foundation (SCEF) and is on the Board of Directors of both the SCEF and the Dolly Green Research Foundation. Dr. Blea is an active member of the American Association of Equine Practitioners and has just completed service on the AAEP’s Board of Directors. He currently serves on the CHRB Medication Advisory Committee and has been appointed to the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Advisory Committee.