

# AgNews

**DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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## **Delaware Thoroughbred Commission moving forward with Padded Whips**

Approximately two and a half years ago, the Delaware Thoroughbred Racing Commission began experimenting with changing Jockey whips to a more humane variety with an extended and padded “popper,” the portion of the whip that makes contact with the horse. The whips were introduced upon advice of Delaware Thoroughbred Commissioner, W. Duncan Patterson, a former steeplechase jockey and Board Member of the National Steeplechase Association (NSA). “The NSA has been using the padded whip exclusively and the time was right to introduce the whip to the flat racing side of the industry,” Patterson said. “However, we found that the padded whips did not hold up under the rigors of dirt racing surfaces which had a “sand-blasting” effect on the materials used in the construction of the padded poppers,” Patterson added.

According to DTRC Executive Director, John F. Wayne, “we asked manufacturers to go back to the drawing board and come up with a padded whip that would hold up under extended use on dirt surfaces. The padded whips that were used in the first experiment were used exclusively on the grass and not subject to the abrasives that are present on non-grass surfaces.” Wayne continued, “two weeks ago, we received a shipment of padded whips made with a more durable material and consistent with our DTRC rule which lists their specifications. With the help of our Stewards and cooperation of the jockey colony at Delaware Park, we began using them in two races a day. So far the results have been positive. There will probably be some individual jockey preferences in whip flexibility, but the padded popper will be here to stay.”

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