



Standard Terminology Relating to Thoroughbred Horse Racing Surfaces¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This terminology defines thoroughbred horse racing terms for use in the development of standard test methods and specifications for equestrian surfaces used for racing or training, or both.

1.2 The terms defined in this terminology are appropriate for use by track maintenance persons and practitioners, racing officials, and other industry persons in matters concerning equestrian surfaces used for thoroughbred racing or training, or both.

1.3 While this terminology standard has some similar terms applicable to other forms of horse racing or equestrian sports, this standard is not intended to address all of the terms that may be applicable to these other racing forms or sports.

1.4 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

2. Terminology

2.1 Definitions:

all weather racing, *n*—racing which takes place on an artificial surface.

DISCUSSION—The premise of artificial surfaces is that they are (or should be) suitable for racing under any weather conditions. See also **synthetic track**.

apron, *n*—the paved area between the grandstand and the racing surface.

backstretch, *n*—straight section of the far side of track, between the turns.

bumper race, *n*—a type of race which is intended to condition a horse for Hunt (or jump) racing in which similar distances (long distances) and track layouts are utilized as in used for jump racing but without the horses traversing any obstacles.

DISCUSSION—This is a type of racing in which horses are being conditioned (or trained) for the jump races, often with horses which previously had only been raced on ovals for flat racing at short and middle distances.

circuit (circuit racing), *n*—racing in which the racing events are conducted over a period of time (racing season) in a series of short racing events (one to several day period) at a succession of various racing venues.

DISCUSSION—In this type of racing, typically the series of race events are conducted at a single venue site over a single day or a few successive days and at the close of the race events the horses are expected to depart the race venue. The horses would then compete at another track which holds their race events over a short duration (one to several days) before closing with the horses subsequently moving to the next venue site. Racing may return to a particular race venue site on a monthly or seasonal basis. Racing venues which host circuit racing seldom board horses or serve as a training facility. In the US, circuit racing is primarily restricted to state and county agricultural fairs.

chute, *n*—an extension of the backstretch or homestretch so as to permit a straightaway run from start.

Clegg Impact Soil Tester, *n*—a brand-specific type of light-weight portable device used to measure impact attenuation. See also **impact analyzer**.

clubhouse turn, *n*—generally, the turn (curve) immediately after the finish line.

DISCUSSION—In a typical US racetrack (oval) configuration, the clubhouse (or primary grandstand area) is located adjacent to the finish line which is located toward the end of the finishing stretch (straight-away). Therefore, the turn which is nearest to the ‘clubhouse’ section of the grandstands (or to the finish line) has traditionally been referred to as the ‘clubhouse turn.’ For racing distance in which a complete traverse of the oval is completed, the clubhouse turn is also the first turn of the race.

composition, *n*—see **cushion composition**.

condition, *n*—as in ‘*track condition*,’ the term used to classify or assign a grade to the level of soils in regards to its performance for racing.

cuppy, *n*—a dry and loose racing surface that breaks away under a horse’s hooves.

DISCUSSION—In soil mechanical terms, a cuppy cushion is a condition where the soil shear strength is insufficient for race footing. The low shear strength may be an exhibited condition which is inherent of the cushion material or from varying soil compaction levels.

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cushion composition, *n*—the specific constituent materials of the cushion defined by their respective percentages of the total mass on a dry weight basis.

DISCUSSION—For a dirt track cushion, typical materials include sand, silt, clay, and organic matter. For synthetic track cushion, typical materials include binder (wax or polymer), sand, fiber and rubber.

dead track, *n*—racing surface lacking pliability.

dogs, *n*—rubber traffic cones (or wooden barrier) placed a certain distance out from the inner rail, to prevent horses during workout period, when track is wet, muddy, soft yielding or heavy, from churning the footing along the rail.

dirt track, *n*—a track surface which is composed of natural soil materials and is devoid of vegetation.

DISCUSSION—The soil texture of a dirt track can vary throughout the textural range but is commonly a Sand or Loamy Sand textured soil material and often contains additions of organic matter. The profile of the dirt track construction typically consists of a regularly-harrowed cushion layer on top.

engineered wood fiber, *n*—processed wood that is ground to a fibrous consistency, randomly sized, having a maximum length (typically < 2 in. (50.8 mm)), and free of contamination and deleterious material.

far turn, n—see **home turn** and **stretch turn**.

fence, *n*—the inside fence is the inside running rail around the race track, while the outside fence is the outside running rail.

first turn, *n*—the bend (curve) in the track beyond the starting point. See also **clubhouse turn**.

flat race, *n*—a race in which the horses run over a course on which no jumps or obstacles are placed.

DISCUSSION—This term does not imply that the track is ‘flat’ or without slope or grade, but merely that the race does not involve jumps or obstacles for the horses to traverse.

float, *n*—a weighted, flat piece of equipment used to seal and/or remove the water from a racing surface.

furlong, *n*—one-eighth of a mile; 220 yd; 660 ft.

going, *n*—the condition of the racecourse. See also **condition**.

good bottom, *n*—a track that is firm under the surface, which may be sloppy or wet on the surface.

head of the stretch, *n*—the section of the track which is the beginning of the straight run home (to the finish line).

home turn, *n*—the final turn (curve) a horse must travel around before entering the home straight in the run to the finish line. See also **far turn** and **stretch turn**.

hurdle race, n—see **steeplechase race**.

infield, *n*—the area within the inner rail (innermost rail) of the racetrack.

impact analyzer, *n*—an instrument used to measure the impact attenuation (relative hardness) of a surface by use of a weighted missile dropped from a specific height (typically within a guide tube) the missile having a linear accelerom-

eter within to measure/record the acceleration (deceleration) and time history of the resulting impact. See also **Clegg Impact Soil Tester**.

DISCUSSION—Various types, sizes/weights and methods exist for measuring impact attenuation properties of soils and surfaces. In the basic form, these devices typically record/report a value for peak deceleration (g-max) compared to units of gravities or (g’s) or units of ‘g-values’. Many Clegg Soil Testers are calibrated to read in units of impact values (Clegg Impact Values or CIV) with each CIV equal to 10 g’s.

jump race, *n*—a race in which the horses must run over a course which contains obstacles as part of the race. See also **steeplechase race**.

layout, *n*—the configuration of the horse racetrack.

DISCUSSION—In North America, most thoroughbred horse race venues are comprised of one or more oval layouts with evenly sloped (banked) straightaways (stretches) and turns, the turns having a higher degree of banking than the stretches. In other regions of the world, the configuration of racetracks is more varied and includes tri-ovals, undulating surface grades, varying turn radius (and banking), rectangles, and even long (> 1 mile) straights. Many tracks also have various extensions or ‘chute’ configurations. See also **chute**. Hurdle racing may be conducted on a wide variety of layouts from a designated course (such as an oval) to an event specific layout in a cross-country fashion.

main track, *n*—with a racetrack venue having more than one oval racetrack, the main track is traditionally the oval which has the most race events.

DISCUSSION—In North America, the main track is most often a ‘dirt track.’ In other areas of the world, the main track may be ‘dirt,’ ‘turf,’ or ‘synthetic.’ This is typically (but not always) the outer most oval in the configuration.

meet (race meet), *n*—the practice of conducting races for a season or extended length of time during the year.

DISCUSSION—Often, racing is conducted a set number of days per week during the race meet while the horses typically board and train at the race venue on a daily basis. Horses can train daily, usually in the morning, primarily on the main track surface.

middle distance, *n*—in a broad sense, a distance from one mile to less than a mile and an eighth.

national fence, *n*—a hurdle measuring approximately 54 in. (137 cm) in height and 47 in. (119 cm) in depth which is made of artificial material, the principal components of which are simulated branches made of plastic which have been inserted into a steel frame which is then set behind a foam-rubber “takeoff” roll.

penetrometer, *n*—a mechanical device (instrument) which is used to measure the ease of penetration of an object into the soil.

pole, *n*—markers at measured distances around the track, marking the distance from the finish.

DISCUSSION—The measured distance of the pole denotes the naming of the subsequent pole. For example, the ‘quarter pole’ denotes the pole which is a quarter mile distance from the finish, not from the start.

post, *n*—the starting point or position on the track of the starting gate.

racetrack, n—a specially-surfaced course (whether turf, dirt (bare soil) or synthetic) which typically has its total distance measured in terms of miles, meters, or furlongs, or a combination thereof.

rail, n—a barrier, generally made of aluminum (which may also be covered with a plastic shield), which forms the inside and outside perimeter of the racing surface.

sealed track, n—a dirt track that has been packed down (usually via use of a ‘float’).

DISCUSSION—Sealed tracks are track surfaces that are prepared while in a normal condition (dry or moist but not wet) in advance of a rainfall event. Dry tracks are sealed in advance of rainfall so that water runs off the surface of the track, reducing the amount of precipitation absorbed or infiltrating into the surface/cushion. Sealing of dry tracks by floating, in preparation of rainfall, may also be accompanied by rolling to increase surface compaction. In wet conditions, wet tracks are often floated simply to smooth the soil and provide a safe and even racing surface.

sprint, n—short race, less than one mile.

steeplechase race, n—a race over obstacles, either hurdle or timber fences. See also **jump race**.

hurdle race, n—a steeplechase or jump race over obstacles made of natural or artificial brush.

timber race, n—a steeplechase or jump race over obstacles which include, but are not limited to, natural wood rails, logs, boards, or stone walls.

stretch, n—the straight portions of the racetrack.

DISCUSSION—Usually denoting the home or final stretch. The stretch portion on the backside of the track is usually denoted as the backstretch.

stretch turn, n—the bend of the track into the homestretch, or more properly the turn section immediately transitioning into the homestretch. See also **home turn** and **far turn**.

synthetic track, n—a racing surface which is composed of a significant amount of non-natural binder or fiber materials, or both. See also **all-weather racing**.

DISCUSSION—A synthetic cushion material typically includes a binder (wax or polymer), sand, fiber and rubber. The intent of a synthetic cushion racing surface is to provide proper footing for racing in which the footing properties are not dramatically affected by climatic changes. In addition to the synthetic cushion surface, these systems are often engineered systems which include a subsurface drainage system and a permeable-paved transition layer between the cushion and the drainage system.

timber race, n—see **steeplechase race**.

track bias, n—a racing surface that favors a particular running style or position; horses that run on the lead or on the rail.

track condition, n—see **condition**.

track superintendent, n—the official responsible for maintaining acceptable racing and training track conditions during a race meet/event.

turf track, n—a racetrack which is vegetated with turfgrass; often referred to as simply the ‘turf.’

wire, n—the finish line of a race.

wood fiber, n—woody material sometimes used for training track surfaces. See also **engineered wood fiber**.

works, n—race horse training event, usually timed, at or close to racing speed.

DISCUSSION—On turf tracks, works (turf works) typically occur on a limited or occasional basis and often restricted to specific horses (by invitation) and number of horses. Often conducted with ‘dogs’ out to restrict the horse traffic to the outside sections of the turf track to minimize damage/traffic on the main racing lanes.

3. Keywords

3.1 athletic field; equestrian; footing; horse; racetrack; racing; sports; sports field; sports surfaces; surfaces; thoroughbred

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