

GOOD NEWS FROM RUIDOSO

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The best news of 2020 for those involved in American Quarter Horse Racing came out of Ruidoso Downs this morning!

Early Tuesday morning, TRACK Magazine received word that Ruidoso Downs would unlock gates to the backside this coming Friday (May 1) and that its 2020 meet would begin on May 22 (Friday) as originally scheduled.

Ruidoso Downs president and general manager Jeff True told TRACK that beginning this Friday morning horses will start arriving at the New Mexico-track on a schedule pre-determined by the track's management.

"The horses scheduled to run in trials for the Ruidoso Futurity and Ruidoso Derby will arrive first, then they will be followed by the New Mexico-breds (for the May 29 trials for the Mountain Top Futurity)," True said.

Opening weekend of May 22-25 will include trials for the Ruidoso Futurity on Friday and Saturday then trials for the Ruidoso Derby on Sunday. On Memorial Day (Monday, May 25), the card will include the \$40,000-added John Andreini Memorial Stakes at 350 yards.

True was quick to credit New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and her entire staff for their work in getting the track open for racing on the dates that were originally granted by the New Mexico Racing Commission (NMRC).

"Everyone in the Governor's office and at the NMRC worked with us to get this accomplished for the state of New Mexico, for the communities of Ruidoso Downs and Ruidoso and for horsemen everywhere," True said. "It was a real spirit of cooperation from everyone."

Only seven tracks in the nation have been racing during the coronavirus pandemic that shuttered most racing across the nation in mid-March, including New Mexico's Sunland Park.

After shelter-in-place orders were issued in New Mexico, Ruidoso Downs' original move-in date was rolled back to May 1. After another shelter-in-place order was issued last week, it appeared the May 1 move-in date was in jeopardy.

One of the things that may have helped preserve the May 1 move-in date was an 11-page Post Covid-19 Operating Plan crafted by True last week and then sent to the governor's office and the racing commission.

That plan established protocols for how horses would arrive at Ruidoso and how the workers on the backside would accomplish their tasks from the first day and onward. It also showed the impact to horsemen, the local community, the state and the horse industry by the loss of racing dates.

The tracks across the nation that have been running during the pandemic have not allowed spectators to attend the races. The same will be true for Ruidoso Downs for a while. Another condition of the opening will not allow owners on the backside.

"It will be different. This will be costly for the owners of Ruidoso Downs with no people in the seats. If people live in states that allow Advanced Deposit Wagering, we need them to wager on our signal. It will help fund our purses."

True also said that current plans are to hold the track's popular two-year-old training races on May 7-8, the Thursday and Friday of next week. He noted that many of the horses need another official work. Ruidoso plans to livestream the schooling races and the track's live meet.

The complete Ruidoso stakes schedule is available on the Ruidoso Downs website: www.raceruidoso.com.

