

October 16, 2019

Via facsimile and e-mail
Sheriff Ralph A. Fletcher
Hancock County Sheriff's Office
Fax: (304) 564-4138
hcsd@hanwv.org

Dear Sheriff Fletcher:

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to request an investigation into the death of a horse whose body was dumped at Brooke County Landfill in Colliers, West Virginia, on or about September 27. A representative of Mountaineer Racetrack in Hancock County reportedly stated that the horse died in a stall at the racetrack, and PETA urges your agency to undertake a full investigation into the circumstances of her death and any apparent violations of W. Va. Code § 61-8-19, which penalizes the cruel mistreatment of an animal, withholding medical care from an animal, and riding a physically unfit animal. While these acts reportedly occurred at the Mountaineer Racetrack, the West Virginia Racing Commission does not enforce state cruelty law; accordingly, PETA is writing your department to request an investigation into this possibly criminal incident.

The photographs below show the horse's body as she appeared on September 27 at Brooke County Landfill.



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PETA FOUNDATION IS AN
OPERATING NAME OF FOUNDATION
TO SUPPORT ANIMAL PROTECTION.

AFFILIATES:

- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)



Staff at Mountaineer have refused to provide PETA with information regarding the horse's identity. As of September 28, a visitor to the landfill was not permitted onto the property to try to obtain her tattoo number (a racehorse has a unique, identifying number tattooed on the upper lip). However, PETA, through its own research, may have determined the identity of the dead horse. On September 25, Bridget Moloney, an eight-year-old Thoroughbred mare, "took a bad step" during race 2 on the Mountaineer track and was vanned off, according to notes from the race on Equibase, an industry website,¹ meaning she was likely seriously injured. The coat color and markings on Bridget Moloney's face, lower legs, and feet in Equibase's race replay videos and in videos of her at auction in 2013 match those of the horse in the photographs above, and the racing leg wraps left on the horse at the dump match what Bridget Moloney was wearing during her last race. Although her lip-tattoo number would have verified her identity, it appears that Bridget Moloney is the horse observed on the pile of dirt and trash at Brooke County Landfill.

A whistleblower spoke to a Mountaineer representative and relayed information to PETA. While not revealing the horse's identity, the representative reportedly stated that, before she died, the horse later seen at the landfill was severely agitated, acting erratically, and biting at people and that she slammed her head against the stall walls, sustaining a fatal head injury. A

¹ Charts, Equibase,
[http://www.equibase.com/premium/chartEmb.cfm?track=MNR&raceDate=09/25/2019&cy=USA](http://www.equibase.com/premium/chartEmb.cfm?track=MNR&raceDate=09/25/2019&cy=USA&rn=2)
&rn=2 (last visited Oct. 14, 2019).

PETA staff member called Mountaineer to confirm this account but was not given additional information.

This dubious explanation warrants an investigation into the circumstances of her death—and into whether her owner or trainer, or anyone else at the track, procured veterinary care for the horse prior to her death. If indeed the dead horse is Bridget Moloney, these questions are especially concerning given that she was injured and vanned off the track two days before she was seen at the dump. What occurred between the time she was vanned off and the time she died? Was a veterinarian on the track and consulted? Was the mare given a post-race examination, diagnosed, treated, or provided with pain medication? Was she humanely euthanized? Was she shot? The track representative's reported account of the death of the horse found at the landfill leaves gaping holes that, coupled with the track's unwillingness to identify the dead horse, suggest the track may be covering up something unseemly or even unlawful. The track officials, trainer, veterinarian, and groom and the horse's veterinary records should have pertinent information—or telling omissions.

The Mountaineer representative also reportedly stated to the whistleblower that the horse's body could be dumped at the landfill because she had no euthanasia drugs in her system and indicated that dumping her body there was an anomaly. However, considering the prevalence of medications administered to racehorses, she may have had other drugs in her system that should have precluded the cavalier disposal of her body on a heap of trash at the landfill. Further, sources have told PETA that Mountaineer has a contract with the landfill to dump horses regularly in a "livestock section." These disparate accounts even of the practice of disposing of horses at the landfill again raise the question of whether Mountaineer is intentionally concealing adverse information.

In light of the foregoing, PETA respectfully requests an investigation into the treatment and death of the horse observed at Brooke County Landfill, who appears to have been eight-year-old mare Bridget Moloney, and whether she was cruelly mistreated, deprived of medical treatment and/or ridden when physically unfit, in violation of W. Va. Code § 61-8-19, as well as whether any other state laws were violated. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am happy to answer any questions you may have [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Elisabeth Custalow
Counsel and Manager of Regulatory Affairs