

Horses not for stew

Suffolk bars trainers who slaughter thoroughbreds

By SCOTT VAN VOORHIS

Suffolk Downs owner Richard Fields wants the thoroughbreds that race at his East Boston track to spend their golden years on a farm, not on a French or Japanese dinner table.

Fields has unveiled tough “no slaughter” rules at the racetrack, severely penalizing trainers whose horses wind up on the butcher block.

Fields last year quietly put into effect a general ban, with a commitment to find homes for all retired racehorses at the track.

But he is now enforcing it with what may be a first-of-its-kind crackdown in the horse racing industry, revoking the stall privileges of trainers who violate the rule. That effectively bans a trainer caught selling a horse for meat from racing at Suffolk, track officials said.

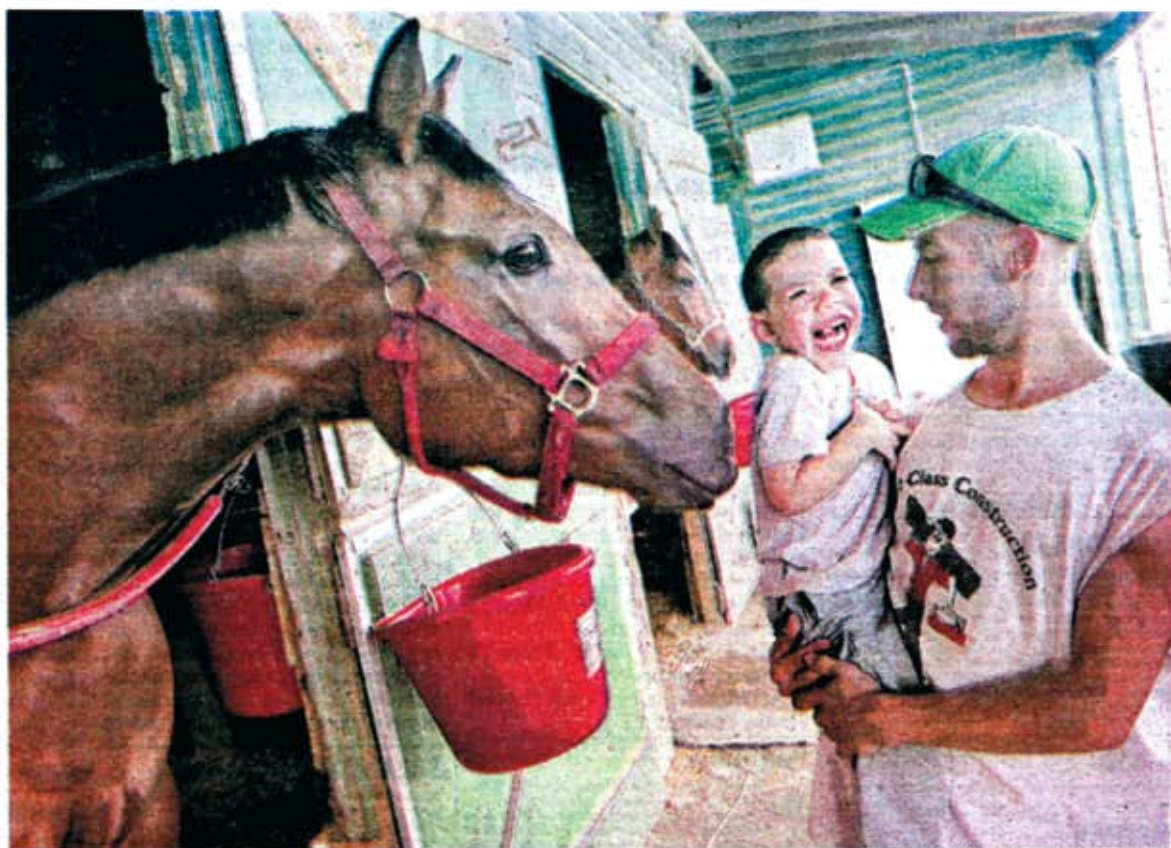
A New York businessman who made a fortune in casino development, Fields bought Suffolk last year with a pledge to revive the struggling track. Fields has overseen sweeping renovations and pumped money into marketing.

His tough “no slaughter” stance, first reported in the Thoroughbred

Times, is attracting widespread attention in the horse racing industry.

“Nobody has gone to that extent,” said Diana Pikulski, executive director of the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. “It’s basically saying if you are going to do business here, you have to treat your horses humanely.”

Fields and Suffolk are putting their money into the effort as well, donating thousands each year to a pair of groups that help provide



STAFF PHOTO BY ANGELA ROWLINGS, ABOVE



FIELDS

retirement homes for thoroughbreds in their golden years.

Fields has also shipped a trio of retired Suffolk racehorses out to his ranch in Wyoming to live out their sunset years.

“He appears to be really an animal lover,”

said Jeff Hooper of the New England Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association.

“I’d like to be owned by Richard Fields,” he quipped.



HORSEPLAY: Held by his father, horse walker Brian Frazier, Giovanni Monteiro, 4, of Winthrop laughs as Big Slick Cat says hi at Suffolk Downs. At left, former racehorse Hansello grazes in the grass at the New England Thoroughbred Retirement Center in Deerfield, N.H. Hansello was stabled and racing at Suffolk Downs in 2007 when he retired after a 33-race career that included four wins.