



GOOD NEWS FOR CAL-BREDS

If you're looking for the half-empty side of California racing, stop reading now.

However, if your glass is half full, there were enough positive developments in 2025 to create upbeat momentum that is rolling into 2026.

The expanded condition allowance for California-breds that went into effect as Santa Anita opened its winter meeting in late December (more on that later) is just the latest in a series of good-news headlines for California horsemen and women in general, and Cal-breds in particular.

Let's review:

In January, the CTBA winter mixed sale posted hefty increases in average and median sale price from the previous year, fueled by lucrative purchases out of the Valpredo Family Trust dispersal, Checkmate Thoroughbreds consignor. The \$170,000 sale topper was Shocking Grey, who only days earlier won the \$125,000 Sunshine Millions Filly & Mare Turf Sprint at Santa Anita.

In February, Santa Anita signaled good things to come by reversing prize-money declines necessary to overcome purse overpayments. Track officials said they were able to raise overnight purses by as much as 10% because key business metrics were on the rise. It was the first of several purse increases, as it turned out, as Del Mar followed suit with a purse boost of its own a day later.

In March, the wildly popular The Chosen Vron became the 10th back-to-back winner of Cal-bred Horse of the Year and picked up hardware for champion older male and sprinter. A week later, Santa Anita and Del Mar announced further overnight purse increases that sent some maiden special weight races into six figures. Los Alamitos joined in with added purse money as well.

In July, longshot 7-year-old gelding Lovesick Blues captured Del Mar's grade I Bing Crosby Stakes, a "Win & You're In" qualifier for the Breeders' Cup Sprint, giving stalwart California stallion Grazen and trainer Librado Barocio their first grade I winners.

In August, the CTBA announced a trio of groundbreaking incentives: the Flagship Foal Incentive Program, which awards breeders \$1,000 per registered Cal-bred foal up to 25; the Waiving of Registration Fees for registered Cal-bred foals born in 2025, 2026, and 2027; and a pilot program for broodmare enhancement that will reimburse CTBA member breeders up to \$3,000 in transportation costs for up to five in-foal mares purchased at out-of-state public auctions for \$20,000 or more who are 12 years old or younger that must be bred back to California stallions. Combined, the incentives are designed to increase and upgrade the annual crop of Cal-breds, which are vital to the health of racing in the state.

In September, a Cal-bred filly from the first crop of Corniche sold for \$250,000 to Legacy Ranch to top the Fasig-Tipton California yearling sale. Barton Thoroughbreds, breeder and agent, consigned the daughter out of the winning North Light mare Carmelita. The chestnut filly is a half-sister to three winners, including multiple stakes winner Carmelita's Man (by Mucho Macho Man) and multiple stakes-placed Buyback (also by Mucho Macho Man).

Also in September, the CTBA announced an early Christmas gift, a boost to the Cal-bred maiden bonus, beginning with the start of the Santa Anita classic meet. Maiden special weight races in restricted and open company run at Santa Anita receive a \$2,500 increase in the maiden bonus award from

\$10,000 to \$12,500, and the same category of race will see a \$2,500 increase from \$12,500 to \$15,000 during Del Mar's summer meeting. The popular program has been in place since 2009, and the bonus is offered in races run at 4½ furlongs or longer.

In November, Streak of Luck, the Cal-bred dam of unbeaten Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) champion Ted Noffey, sold for a staggering sale-topping \$6.2 million to Amo Racing at Fasig-Tipton. Streak of Luck, a daughter of Old Fashioned, was bred by the Roncelli Family Trust and was consigned by Taylor Made Sales Agency, for longtime client Marie Jones, who bred Ted Noffey. The 10-year-old mare was sold in foal to Taylor Made Stallions' leading sire Not This Time.

Also in November, and here we go again: Another overnight purse boost of 5% announced by Santa Anita, raising maiden special weight races to \$70,000.

As mentioned above, **in December** the Cal-bred allowance condition was expanded. Under the previous policy, Cal-breds were entitled to two wins in the first-level allowance if the wins were recorded on different surfaces (dirt or turf). The new enhancement bolsters this program by permitting two wins on the same surface at two separate distance categories: one win at seven furlongs or less (short) and the other at one mile or longer (long). The agreement to expand the available options is on a one-year trial basis for 2026, with the understanding that the cap of a maximum of two wins within the condition is unchanged.

Stay tuned for more good news, as January will feature California Cup on the 17th at Santa Anita, with nearly \$1 million in purses available to Cal-breds, and the CTBA winter mixed sale on the 20th at Fairplex. **CTB**