



# Alberta Downs

EQUESTRIAN & TRAINING CENTRE

## Lacombe, Alberta

### **New B Track Update –**

#### **Alberta Downs Race Track Into the Final Turn**

By Lindsay Ward

Alberta Downs – the new race track and horse-racing entertainment centre being planned by landowner Robert Allen just west of Lacombe, Alberta – moved closer to reality recently after the Lacombe County Council gave second reading to two rezoning bylaws. Now, a development agreement must be reached between the local authorities and the race track developers. That agreement has to be approved and accepted before the project can proceed as a public facility. The Alberta Downs race track and training track is largely completed and scheduled to be ready for racing in the fall of 2008. If an agreement is reached, then a third and final reading must be passed and Alberta Downs would be given a development permit to move ahead with building an entertainment facility. If the third reading is not given, then only the racetrack and training facility will be permitted and essentially run as a private facility.. As Bob Allen states however, “The track will be completed and operated, regardless of what the outcomes of the hearings are”.

Public hearings have encountered some opposition from area residents regarding the proposed 120 slot machines, potential increase in traffic and the extension of the town’s public water and wastewater services to the site. The area residents in favor of the

track cite the increased economic benefits as a result of track workers and visitors using local businesses for their services and the slot machines as a source of generating funds for various community projects. The mayor of Lacombe, Judy Gordon, has expressed support for the development stating that council members believe the track would offer increased entertainment options for the community.

Alberta Downs will include a "One-mile dirt track with an all-weather surface along with a 7/8 mile turf track which will be completely sodden. The dirt track will have a 7-furlong chute with only one turn and a 500 yard straight away for quarter horses. The proposed grandstand to hold 3000 people is the only building that will not be built until after the next hearing is approved. Pre-fabricated barns are also scheduled to be built regardless of the outcomes of the hearings and are scheduled to be completed along with the tracks this fall. The vision of Allen is to "see some high-class international type races held there...not necessarily a long meet...with the A and B circuit working together". Max Gibb, the Chief Executive Officer of the United Horsemen of Alberta, is working with Bob Allen to get the project into the final stages stating that "We are so willing to work with the community on this project; we feel that this track could be really successful here. If we get the bylaw change that we're looking for, we will go forward aggressively to meet our goal of having races here in October". The United Horsemen of Alberta (UHA) is the group that is proceeding towards establishing the new A Track just outside Calgary in Balzac, Alberta.

The new Alberta Downs racetrack would serve to strengthen the racing community in Alberta by offering increased options for training and running Alberta thoroughbreds.