

# diversion



Eric Gregory/ Daily Nebraskan

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Staff Reporter

Gambling is big business in Nebraska.

Last year, horse racing alone took in \$159 million. Such large quantities of money for betting have positive and negative consequences for the state. While creating jobs and revenue, gambling demands regulatory legislation and bureaucratic bodies to monitor activities and increased work for police forces.

According to the University Health Center's spring survey of students, 13 percent bet on horses, dogs, or gambled at cards; 16 percent bet on sporting events; 12

percent purchased lottery tickets and 2.6 percent participated in other gambling activities. Most wagers were from \$1 to \$5, but 11.7 percent were over \$10.

The largest percentage of students gambling on sporting events is a telling figure. Lt. Gary Ingel of the Lincoln Police Department said illegal gambling in Lincoln is mostly on college and professional football.

Ingel said there are "probably half a dozen bookmaking operations in Lancaster County."

There were no arrests for gambling in Lincoln in 1987. However, in the preceding and following years there were 17 arrests each, primarily for bookmaking. Lt. Jerry

Smith attributes the low arrest rate to the large amount of hours required to make these arrests.

Recently, national concern was voiced over the proliferation of video gambling. Electronic poker machines sometimes are played for cash pay-offs rather than extra games. Nebraska is not immune to this form of illegal gambling.

Bill Howland, assistant Attorney General, said it is his office's duty to enforce statutes and work in an advisory capacity to aid law enforcement in matters concerning illegal gambling.

"We are mainly directing our efforts to the confiscating of equipment," he said.

That video gambling is an ongo-

ing problem is evidenced by the Nebraska State Patrol having sent an officer to Quantico, Vir., for special training.

140 video gambling machines were confiscated in 1987, said Lt. Larry Ball of the Nebraska State Patrol.

Pickle cards, the most accessible form of gambling, have been legal in Nebraska since 1983. The Department of Revenue's figures show \$109.5 million was spent on pickle cards last year. The state received nearly \$5 million in revenue. The cards typically are found in bars, liquor stores and pickle parlors.

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