

# **METRO IOWA**

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### **Casino devices screen out minors**

By WILLIAM PETROSKI

Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino has installed high-tech equipment to check customers' ages, becoming one of Iowa's first businesses using the devices to screen out underage people.

Employees swipe the magnetic strip on a person's driver's license through an electronic age-verification device. The customer's age and date of birth show up on a graphic display.

Prairie Meadows General Manager Robert Farinella placed the age-checking gear at public entrances on the west and south sides of the Altoona facility.

Slot-machine players in Iowa must be 21, although casino officials routinely check the identification of anyone who looks under 30.

"Prairie Meadows is steadfast in providing a gaming venue only for adults," Farinella said.

Jim Carter, the casino's security director, warned that the electronic devices will catch a counterfeit driver's license.

"They'd better look out now; it won't work because you can't duplicate the stripe on the back of the license. One of our major goals is to see that no minors ever get in our doors to gamble or consume alcohol," Carter said.

The Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission has adopted a get-tough approach to underage gambling. Last year, state regulators slapped a \$10,000 fine on Prairie Meadows for a single incident in which a 19-year-old man was ticketed after playing slot machines.

Cardcom Technology of Buena Park, Calif., made the age-verification equipment.

Jack Nystrom, administrator of the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division, said tavern owners have begun purchasing the devices to discourage minors from trying to buy alcohol. "They are a hot item," he said.

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