

MA Tack

First of all, thank you to the USDA and Drs. Cesar and Gipson for the opportunity to address the pertinent issues before us here today. We appreciate you traveling to these sessions and are thankful to you for providing the stakeholders of this industry with an opportunity to express our views. I have traveled extensively in my professional career and I know it is a great sacrifice to be away from family, friends, and responsibilities at home. Your time and efforts as public officials are truly appreciated.

My name is Andy Pace. In partnership with my family, I am involved in several aspects of the Tennessee Walking Horse business. We are blessed with pleasure horses, padded performance horses, and pets. We are owners, exhibitors, and breeders.

The issues of which you are seeking public comment here today are of utmost importance to us and the many other men and women involved with this breed who strive to be good horsemen.

In reviewing the questions posed by the Department beforehand, I would like to make comment on the following:

- Should there be a prohibition of all action devices?
- Should there be a prohibition of pads?
- Currently, the Horse Protection regulations have a shoe weight limit on yearlings. Should there now be a shoe weight limit for all aged horses?

The answer to all of the above questions, from my perspective, is an unequivocal "no."

The devices described above are simply tools utilized in the training of this breed. In and of themselves, they pose no threat to the soundness or longevity of the horse. I would venture to say that the pads and weighted devices utilized in our breed are one of the most basic and natural methods at the disposal of trainers. They are also devices and methods utilized in several other breeds and disciplines.

A true horseman in concert with a qualified farrier can enhance a horse's natural ability by simply shoeing the horse properly according to their way of travel. To take away or limit the ability of these professionals to properly shoe horses would be a travesty and a setback to your mission. To diminish the practical knowledge and expertise of the true professionals of this breed would go against the intent of the law.

The equine practitioners that I have had the opportunity to speak with, who have experience in the treatment of a wide array of equine athletes including the Tennessee Walking Horse, will tell you that they marvel at the low incidence of any significant leg, tendon, or hoof injuries with Tennessee Walking Horses. This is surely overwhelming evidence that proper shoeing and appropriate use of these devices is not a threat or detriment to the soundness of our breed or its compliance with the intent of the law.