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Morehead State University 1977  
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I am in a 100% Equine Practice, specializing in reproduction and performance horse lameness and surgery. I have been involved in the Tennessee Walking Horse industry for around 15 years as a veterinarian, treating and diagnosing lameness. I have attended numerous horse shows over the years, and have observed many inspections, and dealt with the aftermath of such inspections where I have greatly disagreed with the findings of inspectors, whether allowing a horse in violation to show, or in not allowing sound horses to show. Thank you for listening to my thoughts.

Progress has and is being made in the practice showing and training the Tennessee Walking Horse, by the improvement of the breed, improved training methods, and better and more thorough inspections. There are certainly still issues within the show industry, and changes are needed to continue improvement of the breed, and to achieve better compliance to the horse protection act.

I believe the industry should have one body that represents the interests of the breed, and to improve the regulation of shows, and to make inspections more fair and consistent. This will be tough, due to the various HIO's, but should be considered in the future.

More input from industry veterinarians needs to be sought, as many misconceptions and misinformation about what is therapeutic for the horse still exists-heel springs for example, (contracted heels are a lameness issue inherent to the breed, do not enhance the gait, and is a cause of lameness that is difficult to overcome. Heel springs, when used to treat this condition, result in a horse that is more comfortable and sound. )

The inspection process still needs more consistency, because there is a wide variety in the process of inspections due to training, ability, "horse sense", and even intent of the inspectors. Having the power of "one person, one disqualification" cannot in any way be considered fair and just, and a different approach is needed to accomplish the goal of showing sound horses. The human factor should be eliminated from the process so that personal biases, personal agendas, and plain ignorance is eliminated. We have all seen inspectors that will find fault and write infractions to all built-up horses at certain shows, and this shows fault in the system as it now exists. Observations I have seen in previous show seasons are presented here:

- No consistency in exams between VMO's/DQP's
- No consistency in exams of individual VMO's/DQP's
- Exams very subjective-Need to be Objective

- No appeal/second opinion possible--one opinion of one individual, you're out
- Validity of thermograph ability to determine compliance very questionable
- "Horse Sense" of VMO's
  - Knowledge/ability/experience of inspectors
- Personal bias to horse, breed, owner, or trainer of VMO/DQP
- Duration of Exam-Inordinate amount of time taken to determine sensitivity. Any horse will show if pushed on long enough

#### Thermograph

- Relevance as a screening/diagnostic adjunct is highly questionable
- Is it being used in an improper manner?
  - Predisposing/clouding judgment of inspectors with modality that has not proven to have diagnostic validity

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remove bias of inspectors-make it a blind inspection
  - ID of horses established at beginning of inspection, then proceed through inspection under a random number, not show number
  - If any violations made, ID of horse corresponding to inspection number is immediately available
  - Have individuals available, hired by show, to take horses through inspection if desired by handler
  - Have a appeal process available where one individual cannot have the power to decide if a violation is present. Peer review by AAEP veterinarians not practicing in the TWH industry would put pressure to increase accuracy and consistency of exams.
- Get more input from industry veterinarians for training of VMO's and DQP's
  - Better training will give more consistent results
- Punish the guilty severely. Stopping other horses from trainers/stables found to have violations should also serve suspensions from showing will deter a lot of horse owners from associating with questionable trainers/stables.

- Remove personal bias from the inspection areas-inspectors do not need to know the name of the horse, the owner, trainer, or rider to make accurate and consistent examinations.
- Is the thermograph really diagnostic, or are horses being unfairly judged because of it.

Thank you for allowing me to present my thoughts to you, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or I can be of further assistane.

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