

## USDA LISTENING SESSION

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By Debbie Rash

When you have a person you know in an abusive relationship, such as a sister, aunt, mother, friend, co-worker, you don't wait 42 years to intervene and do something about it. Even the Dixie Chicks agree with their hit song, John Tucker Must Die. When we as Americans hear that the "Feds" are involved, we immediately can rest knowing that there will be some kind of closure and that the government (the Feds) are going to care of the situation. Whether it be the Mafia, biker gangs or your Federal Income tax. So what is wrong with this picture? Something is terribly amiss with the workings of the APHIS USDA. Its got to be political and somebody doesn't have a backbone to get the job done.

I was here last time the USDA had a listening session. They had a court reporter here to record all the speeches and goings on. It was available worldwide on the internet. It was a learning tool for the public to understand the frustrating travesty of horse soring. If the USDA can afford a budget to travel around the country for the listening sessions, they can definitely afford a court reporter. Why don't they want to have a public 'in your face' record of what is being said? Five minutes of wordage is like a spit in the bucket, compared to 42 years of abusive soring practices.

There has recently been a big case of horse soring. This should have been common new 30 years ago and it should be non-existent today. I'm not excited about it, I am very sad. Sad for the human race and how they allow their animals to be treated. I am devastated for the Walking horse, because they have no voice other than us. We are the same people that are getting really tired of the soring and the big lick shows and tired of asking for help from the powers that be, that seem to be very complacent about dealing with this.

Why are there not limits on stacks? Why are action devices allowed when we know they are used to aggravate the soring process? Why isn't the owner of the Jackie McConnell horse being held legally and financially responsible for the situation? The owner is the enabler. Why doesn't the USDA use the technology that is available now? Why do we

as participants in Walking horse shows, have to pay the price for a very few that are still being allowed to practice this horrific act of cruelty? Whoever came up with the removing saddles before DQP inspection is a joke. We as sound horse supporters would never be able to ride our horses if we put something under our saddles. Why are we paying the price, as sound horse folks? The hassle of the process and the cost has lost the sound horse industry a lot of supporters and owners. This entire process of 'enforcing' the HPA has not worked in 42 years. It's our government, we pay the tax dollars, demand that something drastic is changed and let us watch the sore horse industry fall like pawns and put an end to this nightmare once and for all.