

USDA Listening Sessions Responses

- Congress passed the Horse Protection Act in 1970 to eliminate the cruel and inhumane practice of soring horses. How close are we to achieving the goal?

In 2011, 5 of the industry's HIOs (including the two largest PRIDE and SHOW) inspected 53,783 horses with a 98.3% compliance record. In the case of the PRIDE HIO, the USDA inspectors were present at 33% of those shows inspected. The data referred to in other statistical representations of the industry included only inspections from the "less than 10%" of all shows that the USDA attended throughout the year. The 98.3% compliance rate is a real number and shows that the goal of eliminating soring has been reached.

Total Horses inspected by (5) HIOs 2011: 53,783

Total violations by (5) HIOs: 955

Compliance percentage (5) HIOs: 98.3

- Can the industry achieve a consensus on how to carry out a self-regulatory program to enforce the Horse Protection Act in a consistent way?

The industry has self regulated since the 70's. Currently the industry is undergoing a unification process with several goals including creating more consistency in inspections, professionalism among trainers and educating owners and the public about issues concerning our breed. Joint training sessions/clinics for the industry's DQPs have already taken place this year in an effort to create more consistency in inspections. A Tennessee Walking Horse conference is scheduled in June of this year for our trainers and owners as well as the general public to provide more insight into the training methods and the care of our horses necessary to continue to comply with the HPA.

- What responsibilities should USDA-certified Horse Industry Organizations (HIOs) have within the industry?

Provide inspection services for show managers to ensure compliance with the HPA. The HIO cannot provide due process and therefore should not be *required* to enforce penalties.

- How can the industry reconcile its inherent competition aspect with ensuring compliance with the Horse Protection Act?

The unification process that the industry has undertaken will ultimately address the "inherent competition" aspect by promoting consistency in inspections,

professionalism amongst trainers and educating and empowering our owners who are ultimately responsible for the welfare and humane treatment of our horses.

- What can USDA do now (and in the future) to ensure compliance?

There are a large number of unaffiliated horse shows that need to be policed by the USDA. Various HIOs have over the past few years been able to convince several of these unaffiliated shows to affiliate but many more still exist.

- What responsibilities should USDA have within the industry with respect to enforcement and what hinders oversight of the HIOs and/or industry?

The responsibility of the USDA within the industry is spelled out in the law. The HIO reports to the USDA and it is the administrator's responsibility to investigate and enforce. The oversight is hindered by so many various HIOs having so many various rules and requirements.

- Should there be a prohibition of all action devices?

There is no reason to prohibit all action devices. The action device that we currently use has been scientifically proven to have no adverse or soiling affect as was proven by the 4 year Purohit Study.

- Should there be a prohibition of pads?

There should never be a prohibition of pads. Pads are used as therapeutic devices among many breeds. The package that our horse carries today has proven to be able to withstand the test of time and serves the horse well as proven by the number of horses over 15 years of age who are still sound and in the show ring.

- Currently the Horse Protection regulations have a shoe weight limit on yearlings. Should there now be a shoe weight limit for all aged horses?

There is no scientific evidence to show that weight limiting shoes on aged horses would improve the well being or longevity of the horse.

Summary

The improvements in our breeding and training techniques have produced a more talented horse than we have seen in the past. The Horse Industry Organizations are doing an outstanding job of enforcing the HPA and the percentages of compliant horses inspected prove that. The economic impact of the inconsistency and uncertainty of inspections that has been interjected into this industry is astronomical. In this time of economic downturn, discretionary dollars are leaving charities, tourism, destroying jobs, and hurting retail and other businesses. By concentrating on the current science and enforcing the

HPA as written, the USDA could assist the industry in its continued efforts to ensure the sore horse remains a thing of the past while allowing the industry and all that it entails to thrive economically.