

First I would like to thank the USDA for offering these listening sessions across the country. I hope this gives the USDA a better perspective on the true feelings of true stakeholders the people who own, train, and show Tennessee Walking Horses.

My name is Kim Bennett I am the current President of the Walking Horse Owners Association. Today however I would like to speak on behalf of Kim Bennett. I have owned and shown Tennessee Waking Horses for the past 48 years

Congress passed the HPA in 1970 to eliminate the cruel and inhumane practice of soring horses. How close are we to achieving th goal?

I believe we are very close to reaching that goal however I don't believe the number of horses written and information taken

are all truly in violation of the HPA. After graduating from MTSU with a major in Equine Science and have being a licensed

trainer for the past 36 years. I have lived and slept under the same roof with horses for the past 30 years and I believe I have

the expertise and ability to tell if a horse is in pain or distress. The fact is that many horses merely react to palpation. No

competent Equine Practioner would evaluate a horse on palpation alone and not evaluating the entire animal. The Horse

Protection Act is all about locomotion and should not be based solely on a horse standing abnormally on three legs to see if

it will react to pressure applied by human hands. Growing up I was fortunate to see My My the legendary Saddle Bred Mare

win the prestigous Five Gaited World Championship 3 times. I also saw Suns Delight the ¹⁹⁶³~~1964~~ World Grand

Champion Walking Horse retired. If you compare video of My My today she could still compete in the Saddle Bred industry

however Suns Delight while was great during his show ring career could not compete today merely because of this

industries breeding program which has advanced so far and fast with the aid of artifical insemination and selective

breeding . It has brought to the for front athletic and tallented individuals who can in turn pass thier genes on to the next

generation in a more timely manner. We look for a horse we describe as light legged, athletic, and responsive and then on

ocasion penalize that individual for being light legged, atheletic, and responsive. Theses individuals are more subject to be

responsive during inspection and therefore could give a false positive on our statistics. The only way to help solve this

problem is more continuing education for both HIO DQPs as well as USDA personel. I feel we might be nearing an error

where the USDA and this industry might consider revisiting the entire inspection process. If each ticket written were in

fact non compliant horses In 2011 using statistics from the 5 of the HIOs including Pride and Show with 53,783 inspections

98.3 % were found to be compliant.

can the industry achieve a consensus on how to carry out a self regulatory program to enforce the HPA in a consistent way?

Beer some what
This industry has self regulated since the 1970s. 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 House Industry Organizations (HIO) have with in the industry?

The HIOs should provide inspections services for show managers to ensure compliance with the HPA. Different HIOs

function in different geographical regions of the United States to different aspects of the Horse industry. With this in

mind those HIOs should have the flexibility of using variations of ^Athe basic penalty structure. One size does not always fit all

with penalties as well. I am concerned the current proposed mandated penalty structure may impose a hardship for some

HIOs in that due process must be available to those who have allegations levied against them. The HIOs do not need to be

burdened financially to providing a judicial system for the federal government.

← How can the industry reconcile its inherent competition aspect with encuring 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 to get

involved in the day to day care of their horses.

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

There are a large number of unaffiliated horse shows across the country 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?

Once again one of the top priorities of the USDA should be inspecting those unaffiliated horse shows. Without horses

being inspected the USDA or this industry has no idea if the horses shown at wild cat shows are compliant or not.

- Should there be a prohibition of all action devices. Absolutely not. This industry was a partner with the United States

Department of Agriculture in a law suit filed by American Horse Protection society in the 1980s. Action devices were an

issue in the suit. This industry backed the USDA in their belief and research proved that a 6 oz action device did not harm a

horse.

- Should there be a prohibition of pads. Absolutely not. there is no evidence to prove a pad harms a horse. While in school I

did a research paper on the use of an elastomer on Thoroughbreds to reduce the concussion on the foot. A thoroughbred

at a full gallop will put 2,000 pounds of pressure on their foot everytime the foot hits the ground.. I have yet to see a horse on

pads break a leg in training or in competition.

- 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 not evidence to show that weight limiting shoes on aged horses would improve the well being or longevity for the

horse. Horses come in different sizes with different size feet. Horses with bigger feet wear bigger shoes which in turn

weigh more.

In summary the improvements in our breeding program and training techniques have produced a much 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~~

HPA and the

percentages of compliant horses inspected prove that. The economic impact of the 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 Horse Protection Act as written, the USDA could assist the industry in its continued efforts

to ensure the horse remains a thing of the past while allowing the industry and all that it entails to thrive . Thank You