

USDA Listening Sessions Response
Starkville , MS session
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My name is Tam Brogdon, and I am a long time Tennessee Walking Horse owner and exhibitor. I currently serve as Vice President of the Walking Horse Owners Association of America,(or WHOA), and as such am a member of its Board of Directors. This morning I would like to speak primarily to the area of interest that APHIS posted in the listening sessions announcement concerning the elimination of the practice of soring and how close we are to achieving that 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 the shows PRIDE inspected. WHOA sponsored 26 horse shows last year affiliating 10 of those with the WHOA HIO. 2,749 horses were shown at those 10 shows with only one violation.

The Walking Horse Owners Association mission statement and purpose includes promoting the well being and humane treatment of the horse as well as aiding in the development of standards which will eliminate unfair or unlawful practices affecting the Tennessee Walking Horse. This association takes these objects and purpose to heart.

The strength and integrity of the leadership of the Walking Horse Owners Association is evident in the following excerpt taken from a letter to the general membership released last month by the WHOA President:

“As an owner, you are the stakeholder. You are the only one who can change the course of events that will follow. As an owner you are the custodian of the breed and as such are responsible, and will be held accountable for, the treatment of your horse. I urge you to reinforce the fact that you as an owner do not want any training methods used on your horse that would violate the HPA. This has to be a very clear agreement between you and your trainer. If you think there is any doubt that your trainer does not understand your desires concerning the treatment of your horse, you need to “TWEET”:

1. **TELL** him or her that you expect complete compliance with the HPA
2. **WRITE** a training contract detailing your expectations
3. **EXPLAIN** that you will remove the horse from his barn if your instructions are not followed
4. **ENFORCE** complete compliance by visiting his barn on a regular basis and inspecting your horse on a regular basis. If you are unable to do this, ask a veterinarian to do the same and provide you with a written report.

5. **TAKE** action immediately and secure a witness to your verbal and written instructions.

Attached you will find a sample training agreement. It is strongly recommended that even if you have already completed a training agreement or liability form with your trainer in the past that you reiterate your instructions both verbally and in writing immediately."

The complete elimination of any illegal practice in any society is virtually impossible. We have achieved in this industry an inspection compliance rate that exceeds most standards reached by other USDA inspected groups. We as owners do have a desire for 100% elimination of any illegal practices against any horse, and the industry will continue to police itself, educate owners, and develop new methods to move us closer toward that goal.

OWNERS TRAINING AGREEMENT

To: _____ WHTA Member # _____

From: _____ Owner (s)

Date _____

I would like to reiterate my verbal instructions to you and all of your agents regarding the training of my horse (s) under your care.

AT NO TIME is my horse to be trained using any techniques not in compliance with the Horse Protection Act. This includes but is not limited to the application of any caustic substance to the limbs of the horse for the purpose of producing a more animated gait.

If at anytime I become aware that you or any of your agents have used these techniques on my horse(s), they will be removed from your care immediately.

Sincerely,

Owner

Trainer

Witness #1

Witness #2