



UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2013 RESOLUTION

117TH ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 17-23, 2013 ~ SAN DIEGO, CA

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 33 - APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

SUBJECT MATTER: THE PREVENT ALL SORING TACTICS (PAST) ACT, HR 1518/S1406

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Soring of horses is the practice of purposely and deliberately causing pain to a horse's front legs and hooves that results in exaggeration of the horse's natural gait in show competition. The Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 made the sale, auction and exhibition of sored horses illegal. Unfortunately, soring continues and, as USDA's ability to detect it has improved, methods used to sore horses have become more creative and deceptive.

Chemical methods of soring involve applying caustics (e.g., kerosene, mustard oil) to the horse's lower leg; the leg is then covered with plastic and a leg wrap for several days to allow the chemicals to penetrate the skin. The chemicals cause the horse's leg to be sensitive to 'action devices' and their hoof to be sensitive to striking the ground. This method usually leaves obvious scars, which may be burned off using a chemical stripping agent (causing the horse additional pain).

Physical methods result in pain when the horse's hoof strikes the ground. This causes the horse to lift its legs in an exaggerated high-stepping gait. Methods of physical soring include grinding or trimming of the hoof and/or sole to expose sensitive tissues or removal of the normal support structures of the hoof wall; inserting hard objects between the pads and the sole to place pressure on this sensitive area of the hoof; over-tightening of metal hoof bands to cause excessive pressure; improper shoeing techniques that violate the HPA; and purposefully causing laminitis.

Unethical trainers and owners use various tricks to avoid detection, including application of numbing agents that mask pain during inspection, but wear off by show time; use of harsh and/or painful training methods (stewarding) at practice inspections to teach the horse that flinching or reaction will cause worse pain; application of something painful in a location other than the hoof (distraction device) just before inspection; and providing a substitute horse for inspection (horse switching).

Soring may be detected by visual inspection of the horse's posture and legs and by palpation of the horse's lower leg. Signs of pain include excessive time spent lying down, unwillingness to move, and an abnormal posture while standing or in motion. Inspection and palpation of the leg may reveal swelling, pain, abraded skin, or other signs of inflammation. The hair of the horse's lower leg may be wavy, rippled or curly, and there may be cording scars. Sore horses may also move forward very slowly with short, choppy strides. Technology used to detect soring includes gas chromatography to identify chemical agents applied to the leg; thermographic images, which can identify excessively warm (inflamed/painful) and excessively cool areas (numb); blood tests to detect drugs used to mask pain; iris scanning for horse identification; hoof testers to determine if laminitis or other hoof pain is present; and radiographic

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images to determine if there are pathologic changes to the third phalanx or if nails, screws, or other objects have been placed between the shoe pads and hoof to cause pain.

The Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 1518/S. 1406, seeks to eliminate the soring of horses by improving USDA's enforcement capabilities and strengthening penalties against violators.

Specifically, H.R. 1518/S. 1406:

- Makes the actual act of soring, or directing another person to cause a horse to become sore, illegal, whereas the original HPA only bans showing, transporting or auctioning/selling a horse that is sore, not the actual practice;
- Prohibits the use of 'action devices' (e.g., boots, collars, chains, rollers, or other devices that encircle or are placed on the lower extremity of the leg of a horse) on any leg of Tennessee Walking Horses, Spotted Saddle Horses, or Racking Horses at horse shows, exhibitions, sales or auctions and bans weighted shoes, pads, wedges, hoof bands, or other devices (often referred to as 'performance packages') that are not used for protective or therapeutic purposes. These devices may facilitate soring (action devices) or may assist in avoiding its detection (performance packages). The American Association of Equine Practitioners and the American Veterinary Medical Association jointly called for a ban on the use of action devices and performance packages in the training and showing of Tennessee Walking Horses in 2012.¹
- Increases civil and criminal penalties for violations, and creates a penalty structure that requires a horse to be disqualified for increasing periods of time based on the number of violations.
- Allows for permanent disqualification from the show ring after three or more violations.
- Requires the USDA (rather than the current structure of horse industry self-regulation that has proven unsuccessful for more than 40 years) to license, train, assign and oversee inspectors to enforce the HPA.

Amendments to the HPA proposed in the PAST Act are consistent with recommendations made by the AAEP in its 2008 white paper, "Putting the Horse First: Veterinary Recommendations for Ending the Soring of Tennessee Walking Horses,"² and are supported by the AAEP, the AVMA, and the American Horse Council, as well as numerous other horse industry, veterinary, and animal protection organizations, and horse industry professionals. As of October 16, 2013, the House bill had more than 200 cosponsors and the Senate version had 18.

¹American Veterinary Medical Association and American Association of Equine Practitioners. Position on the Use of Action Devices and Performance Packages for Tennessee Walking Horses. Available at: www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/AnimalWelfare/Documents/AVMAandAAEPPositionontheUseofActionDevicesandPerformancePackagesforTennesseeWalkingHorses.pdf.

²American Association of Equine Practitioners. Putting the Horse First: Veterinary Recommendations for Ending the Soring of Tennessee Walking Horses. Available at: www.aaep.org/images/files/AAEPWhitePaperonTWHSoring.pdf.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) supports passage of The Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 1518/S. 1406.