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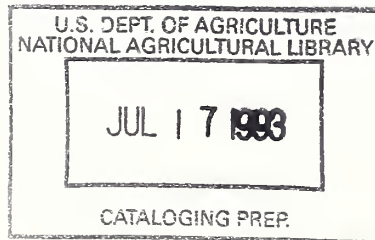
Regulatory  
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# Humane Treatment For Horses

## How the Horse Protection Act Works

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## **What Does the Horse Protection Act Do?**

This law discourages the cruel and inhumane practice of soring by prohibiting sore horses from participating in exhibitions, sales, shows, or auctions.

## **What Is Soring?**

Soring refers to pain-provoking practices to accentuate a horse's gait. It includes injecting or applying chemicals or mechanical irritants to a horse's front feet (or hind feet). The horse responds to this neglect, when walking, by quickly lifting its front feet to relieve the pain. Sore horses sometimes develop permanent scars.

## **Why Do People Sore Horses?**

The accentuated, high-stepping gait of a sore horse imitates the "big-lick" valued by show judges and viewers. It takes persistent, patient training to achieve the popular show ring style, featuring a high reach of the front legs with a long, gliding stride behind. Soring is a cruel short-

cut to achieve this desired effect—at the horse's expense.

High-stepping horses are favorites in the show ring—but form must be achieved by training, not soring.

In the 1950's, winning horse shows became more prestigious and profitable, inspiring some to begin the unfair practice of soring to improve their odds. Since sore horses held an



unfair competitive edge, the practice became widespread in the 1960's. Public outcry led to the Horse Protection Act passed in 1970 and amended in 1976.

### What Breeds Are Covered?

The law covers all breeds of horses. Tennessee Walking horses and other high-stepping breeds—the most typical victims of soring—receive the most attention.



The Horse Protection Act assures that caring horse owners and trainers will not suffer unfair competition from those who partake in the cruel practice of soring.

### Who Is Held Responsible for Soring?

Depending on the conditions, responsibility may fall upon owners, trainers, riders, sellers, and managers of the show or sale. Officials recognize that owners often benefit if horses win a show or sell for a high price and therefore may have the greatest incentive to sore a horse. However, managers of a horse show—the people who run it—have the major legal responsibility for examining each entry and excluding sore horses from the show or disqualifying them before placing the class.

Show managers can help meet these responsibilities by affiliating with horse show associations and abiding by their rules. The associations provide judges, stewards, and licensed “designated qualified persons” (DQPs) to help enforce Government regulations.

### Who Are DQPs?

DQPs are individuals trained and licensed by a USDA certified horse industry organization or association to detect sore horses. They must be expe-



While everyone enjoys winning at the show ring, our highest priority must be the proper treatment of the animals in our care.

rienced with horses and qualified to detect soring. DQPs may be USDA-accredited veterinarians with equine experience or they may be farriers, horse trainers, or other knowledgeable equestrians able to function as horse show stewards and judges.

In addition, DQPs must have at least 14 hours of training in horse anatomy and physiology, in the history and detection of soring, and in other pertinent topics. They attend annual workshops to update their education.

## What Are the DQPs' Responsibilities?

DQPs examine each horse before a show, checking for signs of soring. They look for lesions, scars, or behavior that indicate soring. (Horses foaled after 1976 are automatically disqualified from showing if they have soring scars on both front legs.) The DQP is responsible for barring from shows all horses that don't meet industry standards or Federal regulations.

Based on DQP's findings, industry organizations impose penalties upon those responsible for the horse. Depending upon the seriousness of the infraction, the penalty may involve warnings, fines, or disqualifications.

## What If a Horse Show Is Not Affiliated With a Horse Show Association?

Unaffiliated shows can operate most effectively by hiring DQPs. DQPs serve all horse shows that request their services, regardless of whether the requesting group belongs to the association.



All competing show horses are examined by Designated Qualified Persons (DQPs) for evidence of soring. Violators are subject to criminal and civil penalties including fines and prison terms.

## Who Licenses and Hires the DQPs?

DQPs are licensed by a USDA certified industry organization and monitored by the Federal Government, but they are hired by the managing directors or administrators of a show or sale.

## Is Management Required To Hire DQPs?

Management is not *required* to

hire DQPs. They may enlist the help of judges, stewards, or other officials. However, without DQPs management assumes full legal responsibility for disqualifying sore horses before awarding prizes and before customers view the horses at sales or auctions.

The management who hires a DQP must abide by the DQP's decision and must disqualify any horse the DQP finds to be sore. Otherwise, representatives of management can be prosecuted for violating the Horse Protection Act.

## Who Monitors DQPs and Enforces the Horse Protection Act?

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture—observes and examines horses to assure compliance. By certifying horse industry organizations, APHIS encourages self-regulation of the horse industry.

A DQP's license can be revoked by the USDA certified organization if his/her performance does not meet proper

standards. If the whole sponsoring organization is lax, its certification can also be lifted.

APHIS cannot be present at every show—it randomly selects shows and appears unannounced. However, APHIS can act on information supplied by private citizens to prosecute violators.

The APHIS inspection team includes veterinarians, animal health technicians, and investigators. The veterinarians observe horses throughout the show, giving selected horses a thorough examination for evidence of soreness.

### **What Facilities Are Necessary for the APHIS Inspectors?**

Management must furnish an inspection area near the show ring or sale area. The inspection area must be protected from weather, have adequate lighting, electrical outlets, and a barrier to keep out onlookers. Management must also have facilities to detain horses.

### **What Records Will APHIS Expect From Managers?**

Management must maintain the following records for 90 days after a show: date and place of the show; name and address of the manager, judges, sponsoring organization, and the DQP; identification of each horse and its owner, exhibitor, and home barn; and a copy of the official program of the event (if any).

### **How Is a Horse Determined To Be Sore?**

An APHIS veterinarian examines horses closely, paying special attention to the front feet. Veterinarians examine horses they suspect of being sore, any horse that wins first place, and also randomly selected horses. Therefore, not all horses examined are suspected of being sore.

APHIS veterinarians look for abnormal sensitivity indicated by pain, swelling, tenderness, abrasions, bleeding, or oozing of serum. Scarring may indicate past abuses. They pay particular attention to the coronet band above the hoof, to the front and rear pastern, and

to the bulb of the heel—favorite places for chemical soring.

Veterinarians also check for prohibited devices or training aids that are too heavy, or hard. A heavy, rigid device banging on the pastern during repeated workouts can sore horses.

Inflammation or abnormal sensitivity on both front feet or both hind feet is legally accepted as an indication of a sore horse.



During examination, DQPs and APHIS veterinarians pay particular attention to the coronet band above the hoof, the front and rear pastern, and the bulb of the heel.

## What Action Is Taken Against Violators?

If horses are found to be sore, APHIS conducts an investigation and documents the facts used in levying criminal and civil penalties against those responsible.

A criminal offense, prosecuted in Federal court, carries a maximum fine of \$3,000 and up to a year in prison for a first offense. Subsequent violations are punishable by a fine up to \$5,000 and up to 2 years in prison. Civil penalties, imposed by administrative procedures, can mount up to \$2,000 per violation.

The Federal Government may also disqualify violators for 1 year. While disqualified, a person may not show or sell horses, nor judge or manage an event. Knowingly ignoring these restrictions carries a penalty of up to \$3,000 for the disqualified person and/or the manager of the show or sale.

Industry also imposes its own disqualifications. Therefore, the same

person may theoretically be disqualified both under Federal proceedings and under industry rules. Certified organizations disqualify sore horses and the persons responsible for the soring.

## What Are the Rules Governing Training Devices?

Federal rules permit the following properly constructed training devices but prohibit more than one device on any limb:

- (1) Soft rubber or soft leather bell boots of any weight that are used as protective devices.
- (2) Rollers of hardwood (lignum vitae), aluminum, or stainless steel that weigh less than 6 ounces.
- (3) Single-chain bracelets weighing 6 ounces or less that are free of protrusions, swellings, rust, rough or sharp edges, seams, or other surfaces that contact and may hurt a horse's leg. These bracelets may not sore a horse, regardless of their construction, maintenance, or weight.



Beads, bangles, and other trotting devices (except for certain rollers) are prohibited.

## What Regulations Apply to Pads?

The law permits pads but limits the angle of foot buildup. The length of the toe must be at least 1 inch longer than the height of the heel. For yearlings, the pad may not exceed 1 inch at the heel.

## What About Lubricants?

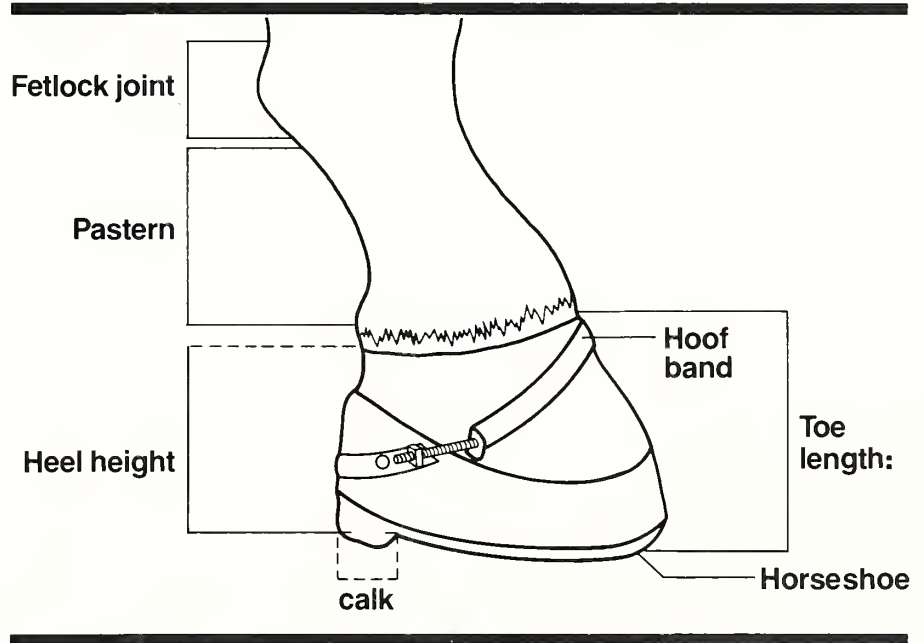
When horses are inspected before a class, they must be free of all



foreign substances including lubricants. After inspection, participants may apply glycerin, mineral oil, petrolatum, or mixtures of these. Management is required to provide lubricants and to supervise their use, making samples available to APHIS personnel for inspection when necessary.

### What New Procedures Are Strengthening the Horse Protection Act?

Veterinary medical officers and DQPs are attending nationwide clinics that allow them to share information on soring techniques. This pooling of information is resulting in quicker detection of new soring methods and more uniform enforcement standards.



The type and weight of action devices as well as the heel-toe ratio are closely regulated by law. Only one device per limb is allowed.

29

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