



4083 Iron Works Parkway
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USDA Comments

Bob Funkhouser, American Saddlebred Horse Association

Thank you members of the USDA for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I'm Bob Funkhouser and I am here as a life-long horse owner and current President of the American Saddlebred Horse Association (ASHA). The ASHA was established in 1891 to represent a breed of horse known as the "peacock" of the show ring. These horses are bred to have high head carriage and an animated, balanced gait. They perform at the walk, trot and canter and some also slow gait and rack. The ASHA represents approximately 6,700 members from nearly all 50 states, Canada, Germany and South Africa.

While I will be speaking to a few highlighted points of concern today I would like to be clear that this is not our Association's official, in-depth response. That will be delivered by the deadline for the comment period.

The ASHA and its members abhor the practice of soring horses. Such a practice runs contrary to and would undermine the free, square trot required for Saddlebreds to be competitive, so there is zero incentive for anyone in our sport to ever show an unsound horse, especially a horse that has been intentionally sored. In fact, an extraordinary amount of daily care goes into the well being of our equine athletes.

We realize that in working with the USDA to amend some of the language, which would have great unintended consequences for the American Saddlebred and its like breeds, we would have to have more than "we love our horses." First off, unlike the breeds mentioned in the HPA, the American Saddlebred is a trotting breed, which must put all of its weight on its front feet while performing the trot and never in the 125 years of the association has a trainer or owner been accused of intentionally soring a horse. Randy Luikart, a renowned farrier who co-authored the amendments made to the HPA in the late 80s has stated, "Show horses exhibited at a trot are required to be sound in order to trot. The veterinary community universally determines the degree of lameness by this gait's asymmetry. Horses exhibited at a trot will be free from intentional soring."





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Secondly, like 25 other breeds and disciplines who put animal welfare first, we do not self govern. We are recognized affiliates of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), the National Governing Body for Equestrian Sport since its inception in 1917. The USEF is dedicated to providing and maintaining a safe and level playing field for both its equine and human athletes. The Federation and its organizers spend approximately \$18 million annually to enforce the welfare, drugs and medication rules. There is drug testing, a hearing process, a hearing committee, an appeals process, and fines and penalties for violators.

We would ask that the language involving the banning of pads and bands exclude those breeds and disciplines affiliated with the USEF. Also, as currently written, the proposed new requirements for horse show management as it relates to recording keeping and reporting is a burden most shows cannot take on. Many shows are run by volunteers on a shoestring budget and this would put them out of business and in the process, cause harm to many of the charities and civic organizations for which they benefit, not to mention the ancillary businesses that benefit from horse shows, including hotels, restaurants and shops in the communities hosting these shows.

The negative economic impact these proposed changes would have would be extremely far reaching. In addition to the shows and communities mentioned above, thousands of individuals and companies that serve the equine community would be adversely affected.

I thank you for your time and consideration of these concerns and look forward to working with you in any way possible.

Sincerely,
Bob Funkhouser
ASHA President

