

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, my name is Dr. Owen Weaver. I am a small animal veterinarian who has been affiliated with the American Saddlebred horse for 21 years as an exhibitor and breeder. I grew up showing hunters but left that discipline when I was 29 years old. I quickly learned that I had many misconceptions about this breed and its human participants. I had been misled. I was immediately amazed at the athleticism and extreme beauty of the Saddlebred horses possessed. I was equally impressed by the meticulous care given to these animals by their trainers and caretakers. Because of these things, and so much more, I have never revisited the hunter discipline.

Over the years my family farm has raised or purchased hundreds of horses and today we stand 2 stallions for the public and breed 10 broodmares. We train and sell young horses and show some too at the highest levels. The farm passes thru its books several hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly and we are highly successful in all facets of the breed.

To address the pad and boot rule first. As I am sure you must be aware, the ASB is a trotting breed. We use pads and boots to distribute impact so as the hoof hits the ground, percussion on the horses foot is minimized thereby resulting in a consistently sound horse.

And, as I am sure you must know, most of the American Saddlebred babies are born with animated, natural motion. I often have three day old babies who exhibit a high natural step. We protect their feet and the soft tissues of the leg as they mature and begin their training with pads and boots. These same pads and boots are used in many breeds nowadays as protective devices--- these breeds and disciplines include hunters, jumpers, Dutch Harness horses, Trotters, Pacers, Hackney ponies, Morgans, Arabians, and Friesians, just to name a few. Because we are a trotting breed we do everything possible to keep our horses sound. An unsound horse cannot trot. An unsound horse cannot win. An unsound horse cannot be sold.

The idea that legs cannot be wrapped and supported before or after competition is counterproductive to the welfare of the equine athlete. Liniments and wraps are used to decrease inflammation brought on by athletic exertion. Liniments and wraps are also common practice in racing and jumping horses. Once again, I cannot state enough, from both an animal

welfare and competitive standpoint, it is not in our best interest to allow our horses to be sore or suffer at any time. A happy horse performs well.

We follow USEF rules and adhere to its requirements. We do a good job of penalizing lame horses in the ring and protecting our own breed from abuse or neglect. WE are the only pure breed that has its own rescue for horses who may have lost a home or been neglected.

There is not one shred of scientific, statistical or factual evidence that shows the ASB as a breed is mistreated, mishandled or sored. There has never been a trainer or owner who has been accused or convicted of soring any Saddlebred.

I can safely assert that this industry loves and reveres this wonderful pure breed it has been entrusted with protecting. I understand trustees of other breeds have not been as careful with their charges, and for those horses I truly grieve. But, because the American Saddlebred may at very first sight, resemble the Tennessee Walking Horse, it is not that horse and does not share its lamentable history. Therefore, I must respectfully request that the American Saddlebred be excluded from the related breeds clause so that it may continue to thrive and enjoy its own future free of false and destructive associations and unworkable, unnecessary federal regulations.

Thank You for Your Attention

Dr. Owen Weaver