

Membership Application

Name: _____

Address (include city, state & zip): _____

Farm/Business/Corporate Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

Breed/Interest: _____

I would like to volunteer my services to the VHC in the following areas:

- Trails Development & Preservation Youth Membership
 Communications Marketing Issues

Please circle one membership category. For Youth and Family memberships, please list the Names and Ages. For Groups and Associations, please list your membership number. Thank you!

Youth	\$10	*Equine Group or Assoc. fewer than 100 members	\$50
Individual	\$25	*Equine Group or Assoc. more than 100 members	\$100
*Family	\$30	Commercial/Business/Farm	\$50
Lifetime	\$500		

Interested in becoming a Sponsor? Please contact the VHC office at 888-467-7382

*Please list the names and ages for all those under a family membership!

*Please list the total membership number _____

Please return this form with your check to:

**The Virginia Horse Council,
368 Litton Reaves Hall (0306), Blacksburg, VA 24061**



VIRGINIA
HORSE COUNCIL

Our mission is to serve as the umbrella organization of the Virginia equine community and to serve as the lobbyist on issues affecting horsemen, horsewomen and horses in the Commonwealth. This is a mission that your Virginia Horse

Council Board of Directors takes seriously and is both committed to following and is dedicated to fulfilling.

2010 Legislative Policies



VIRGINIA
HORSE COUNCIL

...Working to Keep the Ride Alive!

Virginia Horse Council
368 Litton Reaves Hall
MC: 0306
Blacksburg, VA 24061
888-HORSEVA (888-467-7382)
www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
info@virginiahorsecouncil.org

EQUINE SPECIFIC POLICIES

- The VHC endorses ethical and professional transactions with regard to buying and selling horses and believes that under current contract law, the framework exists to enforce this. Additional laws are unnecessary, would be burdensome to the equine industry, and create an uncompetitive situation.
- The VHC supports a continued State contribution to the State 4-H Championship Horse and Pony Show.
- The VHC supports full funding of the Virginia Horse Breeder Incentive Program.
- The VHC supports funding the full percentage of racing commission funds dedicated to the equine industry as stated in Virginia code.
- The VHC supports the reinvestment of Virginia Racing Commission revenue to promote, sustain, and grow the Virginia horse industry.
- The VHC opposes any form of Sunday hunting because:
 - ◊ Need to preserve at least one day of the weekend for horse riders to enjoy the trails
 - ◊ Allows horses to be safely pastured at least one day a week during hunting season.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY POLICIES

Dillon Rule—The VHC supports the current use of the “Dillon Rule” regarding the relationship of state and local government powers and opposes efforts to amend or abolish the “Dillon Rule” in Virginia.

Eminent Domain (Rights of Private Property Owners) - The VHC opposes policies and actions that infringe upon the rights of private property owners. The VHC supports legislative action that prevents unreasonable restrictions and actions against private property owners and supports fair compensation for property when eminent domain authority is exercised.

Freedom of Information - The VHC supports amendments to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act that prevent disclosure of proprietary information including: content of nutrient management plans, premises and animal identification, investigation reports, testing results, and records related to catastrophic events and losses impacting the agribusiness industry.

Initiative and Referendum - The VHC opposes amending the Virginia Constitution to incorporate initiative and referendum procedures that bypass the General Assembly.

Legal Services - The VHC supports accountability and oversight of legal service programs in the Commonwealth to ensure that they are not used to the detriment of agriculture. The VHC further supports requiring state appropriated funds to be subject to the same restrictions as placed on Federal funds to legal organizations.

Workers' Compensation - The VHC supports the existing framework of Virginia's workers' compensation law and opposes any changes that will undermine the basic concept and sound balance of this law, such as broadening conditions not clearly arising in the course of employment.

TAXES AND FEES POLICIES

Estate Tax - The VHC supports continuing Virginia's full and permanent repeal of the Estate Tax.

Homestead Exemption - The VHC opposes the adoption of the “homestead exemption” for residences due to the increased local government reliance on land-use taxation or taxation of business and commercial property to offset the reductions in other tax revenues

Tax Policy

- The VHC supports maintaining current tax status and policies specific to the agriculture and forest industries.
- The VHC opposes a burdensome and unreasonable tax clearance policy related to the issuance or renewal of State licenses.
- The VHC supports Virginia tax laws that:

- ◊ Rely more on taxes that can be fairly assessed on all taxpayers (i.e., income, non-food sales, and fuels) and less on taxes that are unfairly assessed and are burdensome to agribusiness growth (i.e., real estate, services, personal property, machinery and tools, and BPOL).
- ◊ Reduce local dependence on real estate taxes by allowing localities to receive a greater portion of the state sales tax and/or a portion of the state income tax.
- ◊ Do not increase pressures on localities to disproportionately increase real estate taxes on agriculture and forestry lands and agribusinesses.

User Fees - The VHC opposes the imposition of taxes disguised as user fees to fund mandatory regulatory programs designed to benefit society as a whole.

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND RESEARCH POLICIES

Higher Education - The VHC supports funding for higher education programs that will generate a qualified work force for agribusiness.

Land-Grant Universities

- The VHC supports adequate state funding for programs, initiatives, and capital projects that advance research, education, and outreach through Virginia State University and Virginia Tech Colleges of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Natural Resources, and Veterinary Medicine to benefit the agribusiness industry.
- The VHC supports fulfillment of the land-grant mission for education, research, and extension by Virginia's two land-grant institutions and the Commonwealth.
- The VHC supports a continued assessment, with industry involvement, of the Cooperative Extension and Agricultural and Experiment Stations to assure that critical services to agriculture and forestry are preserved, limited resources are used wisely and efficiently, and regional cooperation is considered.
- The VHC supports continued state funding to match "1890 Institution" federal funds to support Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Research programs at Virginia State University.
- The VHC opposes changing or moving the agricultural animal facilities for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech from their current locations without 1) complete funding for equal or improved replacements, and 2) the preservation

of educational opportunities and experiences for students. The VHC encourages the development of an agricultural land-use plan as part of the University's comprehensive plan so that the integrity of all agriculture programs is preserved and Virginia Tech's mission as a land-grant institution is visibly demonstrated.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

- The VHC supports the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and the Virginia Agricultural and Experiment Station (VAES) programs which are essential in providing the latest information, research findings, and technologies to the agribusiness industry.
- The VHC believes State funding decisions for VCE and VAES must recognize that reductions cannot be offset by tuition increases.
- The VHC supports continued priority for agricultural programs through Virginia Cooperative Extension, and maintaining VCE and VAES programs within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech.

Youth Education - The VHC supports continued funding for positive youth education and leadership opportunities through environmental, career and technical education, agriculture curriculum in public schools, Ag in the Classroom, 4-H, FFA, Project Learning Tree, and the Governor's School for Agriculture.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

Agricultural Stewardship Act - The VHC supports strengthening the Agricultural Stewardship Act through additional personnel. The VHC believes this program will continue to be successful as long as it is adequately staffed, sufficiently funded, remains complaint-driven, and is managed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act - The VHC opposes the expansion of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to localities within the western Chesapeake Bay watershed but supports other water quality improvement incentives suitable for the nature of agriculture production in the region.

Department of Conservation and Recreation - The VHC supports balanced decision making between the DCR Director and DCR's Citizen Boards in order to provide transparency and citizen input for programs and regulations impacting agribusinesses. The agribusiness industry should be appropriately represented on DCR's Citizen Boards.

Environmental Stewardship - The VHC supports sound, science-based environmental stewardship on all agricultural and forestry operations.

Farm and Forest Land Preservation and Conservation - The VHC supports the implementation and funding of voluntary programs that would enhance the viability of the business of farming and forestry and conservation of the working lands upon which they depend. Specifically the VHC supports matching state funds for local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs to preserve working farms and forests. The VHC supports tools that will meet a variety of landowner needs, including

perpetual and shorter term easement programs.

Livestock Stream Fencing - The VHC supports the proactive, voluntary efforts of the livestock industry to pursue additional implementation of livestock stream fencing practices, and adoption by federal and state programs of flexible fencing standards and cost-share assistance to implement this practice.

Nutrient Management Program—The VHC supports a voluntary, incentive based nutrient management program, and efforts to educate and encourage implementation of nutrient management plans.

Water Policy and Water Rights

- The VHC supports sound water policy planning that fairly and equitably addresses water uses, water rights of landowners, and water restrictions during times of drought.
- The VHC supports the protection of water rights for agriculture and turf operations and opposes withdrawal regulations or laws that result in adverse financial or operational impacts.
- The VHC supports policies that encourage the appropriate use and management of water resources, including the reclamation of water for irrigation purposes.

Water Quality Programs—The VHC opposes state laws and regulations that are more stringent than those required by federal authority and create an unfair disadvantage for Virginia agribusiness in competing regionally, nationally, and internationally.

GENERAL INDUSTRY POLICIES

Agribusiness Workforce

- The VHC supports policies that create for the agribusiness industry a skilled, affordable, & accessible workforce, including legal foreign workers. The use of legal foreign workers is vital to the operation of many agribusinesses.
- The VHC opposes state & local employment requirements, procedures, or penalties that create additional burdens or duplicative processes for employers, exceed federal requirements or are preempted by federal law, or would adversely impact businesses acting in good faith to comply with federal immigration laws.

Agritourism - The VHC supports agritourism activities & events on farms & forests for the purpose of economic development, recreation, entertainment, or education. Agritourism activities should not be subject to locally adopted or enforced restrictions or conditions except those that are based on statewide guidelines & address substantial impacts to the health, safety, & welfare of the general public.

Agriculture Animal Care Standards

- The VHC supports responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as food, fiber, recreation, work, education, exhibition, & research conducted for the benefit of both humans & animals.
- The VHC supports the proper handling, nutrition, management, & animal health practices appropriate to the care & use of agricultural animals.
- The VHC supports animal care decisions founded in scientific knowledge & professional judgment.
- The VHC supports the advancement of animal care through scientific research & education.
- The VHC opposes state & local actions which are burdensome, unreasonable, & not based on scientific research & that adversely impact animal agriculture producers.

Animal Health—The VHC recognizes the food safety, public health, & economic threats associated with the shortage of food

animal veterinarians & supports efforts to recruit & train an adequate veterinary workforce to serve rural areas.

Economic Development

- The VHC supports efforts & programs to promote agribusinesses (including agritourism & direct marketing), establish, expand, & retain agriculture & forestry operations, & assist in the growth of agribusinesses in Virginia. Economic development of agribusinesses should not be limited by local requirements which are more restrictive than those established at the State level.
- The VHC encourages state & local governments to actively involve agribusiness leaders in creating economic development strategies & ordinances. The VHC supports the State's Agribusiness Development Program as a tool to increase awareness of the economic benefits of agribusiness & encourage growth in the industry.
- The VHC supports the exemption of farm buildings & structures from the provisions of the Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Energy - The VHC supports a stable, affordable, & reliable supply of all forms of energy. To increase energy independence, reduce emissions, provide a stable market for Virginia commodities & agribusinesses, & reduce dependence on non-renewable fuels.

Fence Laws - The VHC supports protection from liability for livestock owners whose animals escape from a legal, well-maintained fence.

Gubernatorial Appointments - The VHC supports the Governor appointing to positions impacting agriculture, forestry, or agribusiness individuals who have industry experience or appropriate general knowledge & who are committed to serving constituents & maintaining the vitality of agribusiness as the largest sector of the Commonwealth's economy.

Humane Investigators

- The VHC opposes further expansion of animal care investigations by untrained,

unsupervised citizen volunteers.

- The VHC supports increased funding & emphasis on training & certification for Animal Control Officers appropriate for animal agriculture.

Land Use Assessment - The VHC supports & encourages localities to adopt land use assessment for agricultural, horticultural, forest, & open space uses, believing that land should be assessed on its use rather than its potential value.

National Animal Identification System (NAIS) - The VHC supports the continued implementation of a voluntary animal identification & registration system in Virginia based on USDA guidance provided that producer data & information is adequately protected. This program assists in managing animal health & disease outbreaks, protects commerce, & helps to maintain a safe food supply.

Right-to-Farm - The VHC continues to support the purpose of right-to-farm legislation, which removes the conditional or special use requirement in an agriculturally zoned area for agriculture & forestry operations. The VHC believes the Act, provides adequate public input into the location of agricultural operations.

Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry - The VHC supports a Virginia Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry as a cabinet level position to enhance the importance & influence of agribusiness in the Commonwealth.

State Fair of Virginia - The VHC supports the State continuing its support for the State Fair & its mission of agriculture & forestry education & promotion.

State Funding

- The VHC supports adequate funding & staffing of State Agencies in order to effectively & efficiently promote & support the economic growth & development of Virginia agriculture & forestry.
- The VHC opposes the transfer of special dedicated non-general funds (i.e. Commodity Boards, State Milk Commission, the Virginia Agricultural Council, & the Reforestation of Timberland fund) to the general fund of the state treasury.
- The VHC opposes unfunded mandates on the agribusiness industry & affiliated

State agencies, land-grant universities, & the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. Mandates should be reviewed to assess the costs, impacts, & benefits to the Commonwealth & impacted industries.

- The VHC encourages critical assessment of budget reductions to ensure that core services to the agribusiness industry are preserved & that additional costs are not imposed on the agribusiness industry.

Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

- ◇ The VHC supports an effective level of funding for industry marketing programs including Virginia's Finest, Virginia Grown, & domestic & international promotions.
- ◇ The VHC supports funding to facilitate statistical commodity surveys on a five-year rotating basis including turfgrass, aquaculture, equine, fruit trees, grapes, & greenhouse/nursery.
- ◇ To guarantee fair trade & competitiveness for the Commonwealth's agribusiness industry, the VHC supports adequate state funding for weights & measures, inspection, & grading programs that ensure the integrity of agricultural commodities, commercial animal feed, fertilizer, lime, & seed.
- ◇ The VHC supports adequate funding for the State Veterinarian's office to provide necessary services to the agribusiness industry & enhance animal disease monitoring and emergency response efforts.

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

- ◇ The VHC supports essential funding for Soil & Water Conservation District operations and technical assistance to meet water quality standards.

Terrorism

- The VHC supports strong effective systems to prevent, detect, & respond to acts of terrorism directed toward any facet of the agribusiness industry including research, production, processing, & distribution.
- The VHC supports full enforcement of the law against persons who threaten or carry out violence & other extremist acts directed at scientists and agribusinesses.