



Working to keep the ride alive!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR, VHC MEMBERS & FRIENDS!
TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

**A MESSAGE FROM VHC
PRESIDENT, PAT MULLINS**

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**Membership Application
on mailing label page.**

During this session of Congress our Federal elected officials will be studying and debating a very controversial bill affecting Horse Owners throughout the United States... the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (HR 857 and S 2352).

To quote the language in the bill:

“A bill to prevent the slaughter of horses in and from the United States for human consumption by prohibiting the slaughter of horses for human consumption and by prohibiting the trade and transport of horse flesh and live horses intended for human consumption and for other purposes.”

To further quote the bill (Sec. 3-- Purpose):

“The purpose of this Act is 1) to prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption

2) To prohibit the sale, possession and trade of horse flesh for human consumption and

3) To prohibit the sale, possession and trade of live horses for slaughter for human consumption.”

The bill provides for criminal fines and up to one-year imprisonment for those violating the Act as well as civil penalties of up to \$5,000.

Proponents of the bill include The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), The Doris Day Animal Welfare League, the Humane Society and the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association.

The consortium has taken out a full-page advertisement voicing its support of the act in the Washington Post, one of the most expensive advertising mediums in the country.

Opposition to the act includes over 30 Associations and Organizations,
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Association, The Animal Welfare Council and ten State Horse Councils.

At our October meeting the Board of Directors of the Virginia Horse Council unanimously joined these other Associations in opposition to the bill and reconfirmed this position of unanimous opposition at our November Board meeting.

Your VHC Board of Directors had numerous concerns with the act.

The Virginia Horse Council has been, is and will always be in support of humane and appropriate management practices for horses. This policy applies to the aged, crippled and unmarketable horse, as well as the healthy useful animal.

And while we feel that the Act was formulated with good intentions, as a Board of Directors we strongly felt that passage of the act would in all probability result in greater suffering for debilitated and crippled horses.

We also agreed with the Virginia Agribusiness Council, which objected to the proposed restriction of property rights of Horse Owners. The Agribusiness Council statement said "Horses are livestock and we respect the rights of livestock owners to manage their property in their best interest, provided the animals are humanely treated."

In reviewing the Act your Board of Directors were concerned about the following points:

First, it is estimated that roughly 55,000 horses are processed through slaughter facilities in the United States each year and estimates are that another 40,000 are shipped to slaughter facilities in Canada and the United States.

The Act would provide that horses destined for slaughter would instead go to rescue facilities. However no funding is provided to assist those rescue facilities in meeting such an increase in demand. Nor is any funding provided to monitor these facilities and the care the horse would receive at a rescue facility. Inadequate funding creates a huge potential to create opportunities for inadequate care.

Second, the Act does not establish standards of care that horse rescue facilities must meet

Third, the VHC Board of Directors felt that wording in the proposed legislation was much too vague.

For instance, the bill "Prohibits the transport of live horses intended for human consumption **AND OTHER PURPOSES,**" and goes on to state that "authorized persons may seize the cargo (horses) of any vehicle which REASONABLY APPEARS to have been used or employed in violation of the act".

We felt that this legislation leaves too much discretion in the hands of authorized persons" who may not necessarily be knowledgeable about our equine

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including the two largest American Equine Breed Associations, (The American Quarter Horse Association and The American Paint Horse Association) as well as the highly respected American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), The American Veterinary Medical

industry and could randomly, and at will, stop and detain vans and trailers taking horses to shows or other equine events. And they could, if they felt that the van or trailer was being used in violation of the act, seize the horses and have them sent to rescue facilities.

Fourth, The Board was also concerned about the significant cost to a horse owner of euthanasia and disposal of the remains. The Board expressed concern that given this cost horses might be abandoned by their owners.

This is not a position that we take lightly. We initially decided to remain neutral and asked our Issues Committee to study the bill, its pros and its cons, and come back to us with a recommendation.

The recommendation of the Committee was that The Board of Directors voiced its opposition to the Bill and this decision was confirmed at two separate Board meetings.

We know that many members of our Council are either in strong support or strong opposition to the Bill and we urge you to make your opinion known to your District Congressional Representative and to Senators John Warner and George Allen.

The full text of our position is as follows:

The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act – H.R. 857

The primary goal of this bill is to prevent the slaughter of horses for human consumption by prohibiting the trade and transport of horseflesh and live horses intended for human consumption and other purposes.

Many Americans find the eating of horsemeat to be repugnant, just as they find the consumption of dog and cat meat unacceptable. While the VHC accepts that these customs might cause offense, we believe that the VHC should address those aspects of H.R. 857 which encroach on our rights as owners, guardians or managers of our horses to determine humanely the future of our horses.

This bill has been poorly drafted and creates a number of dangerous precedents, and the VHC feels that this bill, as it is now stands, would not be in the best interests of horse owners, for the following reasons.

It allows for the seizure of horses in transport on the mere suspicion that they may be going to slaughter.

- Who is to say they are not being transported for some other purpose.
- All the horses (not just those being transported) in the possession of an accused person would be subject to confiscation.

Any law enforcement officer and any person authorized by the Secretary may execute this process of

arrest, search and seizure.

- Violators are presumed guilty until proven innocent.
- Violators will be prohibited from ever “importing, exporting, transporting, trading or selling horses in the United States...”
- Horses that have been seized would be placed “with an animal rescue facility” or “a facility that has as its primary purpose the humane treatment of animals, or another suitable location.”

The person charged “would have to post a bond in the amount providing care to the horse for 60 days.”

- “If a bond is not posted, the custodial facility shall determine permanent placement of the horse...”
 - This allows the custodial facility to adopt out the horse, without regard for the wishes of the owner.
 - More troubling is that if there are no suitable facilities available at the time of seizure, or within 90 days, then an equine veterinarian shall perform euthanasia by chemical injection.

The bill will provide funding to rescue organizations, in the form of grants, though the cost of caring for these seized animals will probably greatly exceed the funds available.

Many horse owners/guardians are concerned that this Bill will usurp their property rights and they could be compelled to act in a way they consider to be incompatible with the welfare of their horse.

The Virginia Horse Council believes that most horse owners are committed owners who have great concern for the welfare of their animals. It is our opinion that these caretakers are often in the best position to make decisions which would affect the well-being of their animals.

**TRAILS REPORT
CHECK OUT VHC WEBSITE
AT
www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
FOR A FULL TRAILS REPORT**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

As you organize your 2005 calendar of horse activities not to miss, be sure to note **Friday, March 18, 2005**. The Virginia Horse Council is having its **Annual Meeting** that date at **6:30 p.m.** at the **Holiday Inn Select in Chantilly, VA**. This is adjacent to the Dulles Expo Center—site of the Second Annual Equine Event East, which will be taking place that weekend, March 18-20.

The VHC Annual Meeting is free and open to the public. The event promises food, fun, camaraderie, a cash bar, and updates on what's going on in the Virginia horse industry. The reception will start at 6:30 p.m., followed by the business meeting, including the election of officers for the new year. A keynote speaker will then take the floor and the annual VHC Awards presentation will top off the evening.

In addition, if you join the Virginia Horse Council – or renew your membership-- you will be entitled to a raffle ticket for a free weekend getaway at the Marriott Ranch in Hume, VA.

The Virginia Horse Council is also looking for sponsors for the Annual Meeting. If you would like to be a sponsor and receive additional publicity in all of the VHC's promotions ads, and mailings for the event, contact Jeff Shoup, at 703/754-4981, or at jshoup@quixnet.net

More details will appear in upcoming issues of *The Southeast Equine*, but do also check the VHC website, www.virginiahorsecouncil.org for information on speakers, sponsors, and other surprises will be posted as it becomes available.

VIRGINIA TECH'S MARION DUPONT SCOTT EQUINE MEDICAL CENTER TO HOST "TUESDAY TALKS" LECTURE SERIES

The Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Va., one of three campuses operated by the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, announced their schedule for its popular "Tuesday Talks" equine lecture series. The informal lectures feature equine medical center faculty and guest speakers discussing topics of interest in equine veterinary medicine.

"**Treating Hoof Problems**" will be presented on Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2005 by R. Scott Pleasant, Equine Extension Specialist, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Blacksburg campus.

"**Diagnosis and Management of the Septic Foal**" will be presented on Tuesday, March 8, 2005 by

Harold C. McKenzie III, assistant professor of equine medicine at the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center.

All lectures begin at 7 p.m. in the equine medical center's library. No fee is charged for the lectures, but seating is limited and reservations are required. Additional information is available from the "educational opportunities" link at <http://www.equinemedicalcenter.net>

To be included on the equine medical center's continuing education mailing list, call Amy Troppmann at 703-771-6843 or e-mail atroppmann@vt.edu.

The Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (VMRCVM) is a two-state, three-campus professional school operated by the land-grant universities of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and the University of Maryland at College Park. Its flagship facilities, based at Virginia Tech, include the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, which treats more than 40,000 animals annually. Other campuses include the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Va., and the Avrum Gudelsky Veterinary Center at College Park, home of the Center for Government and Corporate Veterinary Medicine. The VMRCVM annually enrolls approximately 500 Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and graduate students, is a leading biomedical and clinical research center, and provides professional continuing education services for veterinarians practicing throughout the two states.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 18 - VHC Annual Meeting, Dulles Expo Center.
March 18, 19 - Equine Event East - Dulles Expo Center.
April 4/22, 4/23, 4/24 - Equine Extravaganza
May 20-21 - Legislative Trail Ride, VA Horse Center, call Ron Frank for further information at 540-544-7471.

YOUTH ART CONTEST
The Youth Art Contest is
coming up soon!
Please check out VHC's website
at
www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
to print out your application!

EQUINE FEED CHECKOFF

The Virginia Horse Council is planning to have legislation introduced into the 2005 General Assembly calling for a referendum of equine owners in the Commonwealth to determine their interest in supporting a horse feed checkoff. The assessment would be \$3 per ton, or 7.5 cents per bag of commercial equine feed.

The objective of the feed checkoff is to assist in the long-term growth of Virginia's horse industry. Estimates are that such a checkoff could raise as much as \$200,000 that would be used to provide research, educational, and promotional support for expansion of the industry.

All equine owners of voting age in Virginia would be eligible to vote. A simple majority of the certified equine owners who vote will enable the passage of the equine feed checkoff program.

Monies will be collected annually by the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services from all equine feed manufacturers in the state. The Virginia Horse Industry Board will be responsible for administering programs and projects funded by the proposed checkoff.

Three other states have equine feed checkoffs—Illinois, Maryland, and North Carolina.

For updates on the equine feed checkoff, visit the VHC website, www.virginiahorsecouncil.org

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Robert S. Bloxson has been appointed the first Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Governor Mark Warner recently appointed the former delegate to the newly created Cabinet position. Bloxson, 67, served in the Virginia House of Delegates representing Accomack from 1978 until his retirement at the end of 2003. The new Secretary will be responsible for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Virginia Department of Forestry. VDACS Commissioner Carlton J. Courter, III, will remain in his position and will report to the new Secretary; formerly VDACS reported to the Secretary of Economic Development.

Dr. Nathaniel White, director of the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, has recently received the "Distinguished Service Award" from the American Association of Equine Practitioners. Dr.

White was honored at the AAEP's annual meeting in Denver. This award recognizes those who have provided exemplary service to the AAEP, the horse industry, or the equine veterinary profession. Dr. White became the Center's director in June 2004 and was named the Jean Ellen duPont Shehan Professor and Director in November 2004.

The AAEP is the world's largest professional association of equine veterinarians.

VHC LEGISLATIVE DAY AND JOINT LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION WITH VVMA

Each year a delegation from the VHC visits members of the Virginia General Assembly to discuss issues coming before the Assembly that are of interest to the Virginia horse industry. This year's visitation day was held January 20th.

In addition to the Feed Checkoff, VHC members also asked that the Racing Commission's funding for the Virginia Horse Center and the Virginia Horse Industry Board be returned, restoration of funding to the Horse Breeders' Incentive Fund, continuation of funding and support of the Virginia Horse Center, funding for the Virginia State 4-H Horse Show and that new extension positions, including two horse specialists be funded.

Following the day of visitation, the VHC hosted a joint legislative reception with the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association at the Old City Hall, Richmond, Virginia.