



VIRGINIA
HORSE COUNCIL

VIRGINIA HORSE COUNCIL POSITION PAPER SUNDAY HUNTING

Position: The Virginia Horse Council opposes expanding any form of hunting with a gun, firearm or weapon to Sundays which would adversely impact the safe use of rural lands for agriculture activities including riding and pasturing our horses.

Background:

- The only time hunting season is not open is during June July, and the first couple of weeks of August. Hunting seasons currently represent over 58% of the days of the year.
- It is estimated that less than 1% of citizens in Virginia participate in hunting activities.
- Prohibiting Sunday hunting is an equitable use of the Commonwealth's resources on the weekend, as Horsemen and other outdoor users have curtailed their activities and adjusted their schedules to enjoy the trails on Sunday and hunters can use the same lands on Saturday, as well as the other five days of the week.
- The current law which prohibits hunting on Sunday provides an opportunity for the majority of the Commonwealth's citizens, including horse owners, property owners, and trail riders to enjoy Virginia's scenic trails and outdoors, without fear of loud gunshots or hunters spooking the horses causing an injury. To put it simply, two user groups (hunters vs. other outdoor users) with vastly different purposes cannot use the same property, because it creates conditions likely to result in an accident.
- The VHC is not opposed to hunting or hunters, but wishes to preserve one day a week for the majority of citizens in the Commonwealth who choose to ride, hike, and bike or otherwise enjoy the outdoors.
- 14 of 27 foxhunts ride on Sundays during deer season in Virginia, and for some it may mean closing their hunt.
- Sunday Hunting could result in a substantial increase in use on the State Parks, National Battlefields, and regional parks and they may not be adequately prepared, either physically or financially for increases in users.
- Thousands of dollars raised annually by community charity rides will be lost if Sunday Hunting is approved. This is a sample of the type of organizations currently benefiting from charity rides: community fire departments, Loudoun Therapeutic Riding Horses for Heroes program, Marion DuPont Scott Equine Medical Center, Good Samaritan Fund, St. Jude's, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Studies, Ride with Pride, Inc., Equine Rescue groups, and Fauquier SPCA, along with many other organizations.

Facts from The Economic Impact of the Horse Industry in Virginia, conducted by the Center for Economic and Policy Studies, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, March 8, 2011:

- Equines are the 9th largest agricultural commodity in Virginia (\$102,400,000 in cash receipts).
- Virginia ranks 12th in the nation for numbers of horses.
- It is estimated that there are over 215,000 equines in VA and over 41,000 equine operations.
- The most popular category of horse use in Virginia is recreational riding, including trail riding on public and private lands.

Action Requested: The Virginia Horse Council opposes any form of Sunday hunting at any time on that day because of the danger to horsemen having their horse startled by gunshot or hunters in the woods. Further, it is a fundamental issue of fairness that an overwhelming majority of the Commonwealth's citizens (including horsemen, bikers, hikers, real estate agents, and other outdoor enthusiasts) have one day a week to enjoy the outdoors.

The Virginia Horse Council is a non-profit membership organization whose mission is to "Represent Virginia's Diversified Equine Industry with a Unified Voice." Our membership includes owners of equine breeding operations, event and competition riders and owners, trail and pleasure riders, horse show competitors, therapeutic riding programs as well as numerous individual equine organizations across the state. Positions on state issues are reached after thorough study in consultation with VHC members during the State Policy Development Process. The 2013 Policy on State Issues was approved by the Board of Directors on January 30, 2013

Virginia Horse Council

388 Litton Reaves (0306), Blacksburg, VA 24061 | info@virginiahorsecouncil.org | 888-467-7382 | Fax: 540-231-3010

www.virginiahorsecouncil.org