

Horse Owners, Trainers and Horse Show Managers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing amendments to the horse protection regulations section of the Horse Protection Act. The proposed changes can be found at

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/news/SA_By_Date/newsroom-2016/SA-07/hpa-changes . **The Horse Protection Act covers all breeds**, although violations have typically been

associated with Tennessee Walking Horses and Racking Horses. The proposed changes are being evaluated by the VHC for impacts to Virginia horsemen and the horse industry in Virginia.

The Significant Changes and Impacts Identified Thus Far Include:

- APHIS would assume responsibility for training, screening and licensing horse inspectors. The new cadre of **inspectors would be veterinarians and veterinary technicians...** (emphasis added)
- APHIS would **ban the use of all action devices, pads, and foreign substances** at horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions, **for Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses or related breeds** (emphasis added)
- Additional costs to horse shows for additional inspectors, a farrier, and record keeping
- An "Identification Card" will be required for all horses presented for inspection

Undefined Terms Being Used in Proposed Amendments

Several terms are undefined or broadly defined. The addition of the phrase which includes several undefined terms "...Tennessee Walking Horse, Racking Horse, **or related breed that performs with an accentuated gait...**" The term "foreign substance" and "substance" is defined broadly as "any substances are prohibited on the limbs of any TWH, Racking Horse, or related breed that performs with an accentuated gait..."

The implication of these proposed changes could be far reaching, affecting breeds other than just Tennessee Walking Horses and Racking Horses and horse shows that include those breeds.

Dr. Kay Carter-Corker, the Assistant Deputy Administrator of Animal Care in the APHIS division confirmed that the terms "related breeds, accentuated gait, and substance/foreign substance" have not been further defined at this time.

The public comment period on these proposed changes is open until September 26, 2016. APHIS is holding five public meetings (prior registration is required) to seek additional comments and feedback from the public. Those meetings are scheduled for:

- Tuesday, Aug. 9 in Murfreesboro, Tenn.
- Wednesday, Aug. 10 in Lexington, Ky.
- Tuesday, Aug. 16 in Sacramento, Calif.

- Tuesday, Sept. 6, in Riverdale, Md.
- Wednesday, Sept. 15, a call-in virtual public meeting.

More information about those meetings – including how to participate – can be found on the Animal Care website at: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalwelfare/horse-protection-amendments>

Comments may also be submitted either by visiting the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov/comment?D=APHIS-2011-0009-0001>

By postal mail/commercial delivery to:

Docket No. APHIS-2011-0009, Regulatory Analysis and Development PPD APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD, 20737-1238.

After September 26, 2016 APHIS will review them and draft a final ruling. The final ruling will again be posted for comment.

The Virginia Horse Council supports ending the unnecessary, cruel and inhumane practice of soring horses.

The original HPA can be found here:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalwelfare/SA_HPA