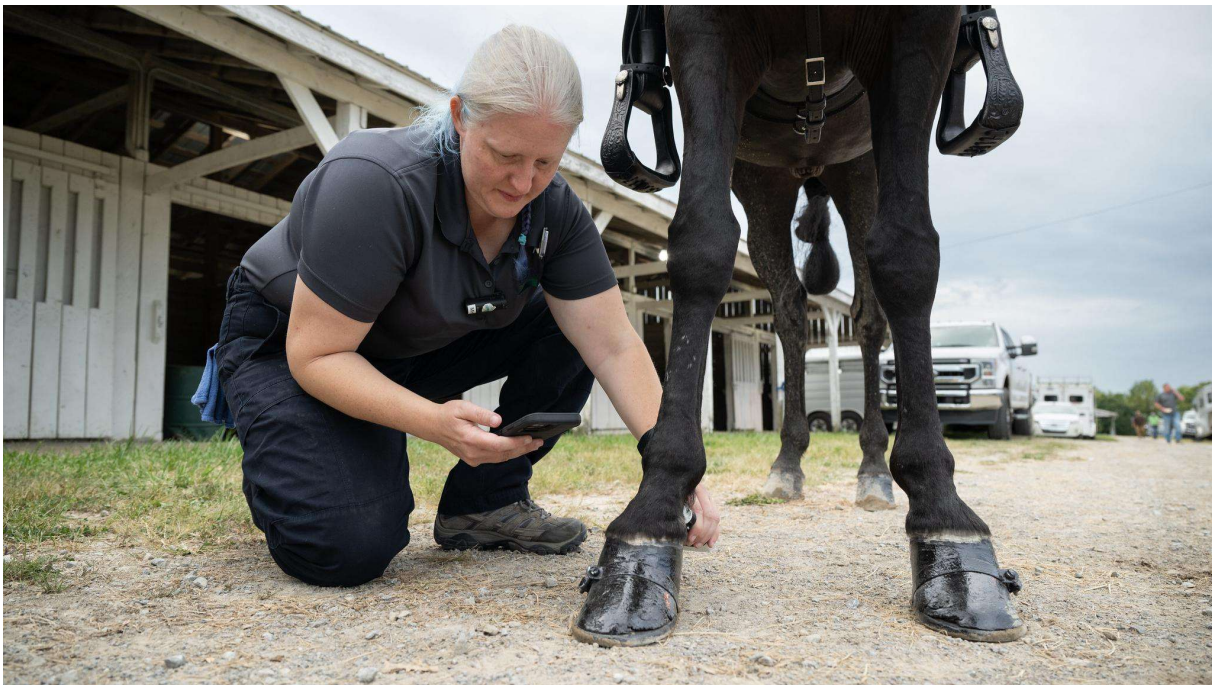


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Horse Protection Act

Last Modified:



The **Horse Protection Act** is a Federal law that prohibits sored horses from participating in shows, exhibitions, sales or auctions. It also prohibits the transportation of sored horses to or from any of these events.

Soring is a cruel and inhumane practice used to accentuate a horse's gait. Soring can be accomplished through the use of certain substances, devices, and/or practices that when applied to a horse's limb can cause physical pain, distress,

inflammation, or lameness when walking, trotting, or otherwise moving. A horse that has been sored will pick up its feet higher and faster, creating a highly animated gait that is desired in specific breed classes, such as those of Tennessee Walking Horses and racking horses.

File an Animal Welfare Complaint

To file a complaint regarding soring, use our online form.

[Start Here](#)

About the Horse Protection Act

Horse Protection Act and Regulations

[Horse Protection Act](#)

[U.S. Code Title 15-Commerce and Trade, Chapter 44- Protection of Horses, Sections 1821-1831](#)

[Horse Protection Regulations](#)

[Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9 - Animals and Animal Products, Chapter I-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Part 11](#)

[Rules of Practice Governing Proceedings Under the Horse Protection Act](#)

[Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9-Animals and Animal Products, Chapter I-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Part 12](#)

Inspection

The Horse Protection Act is administered by APHIS. A 1976 amendment to the Act led to the establishment of the Designated Qualified Person (DQP) program. A DQP must be an individual who meets APHIS' regulatory requirements and is licensed by a Horse Industry Organization (HIO) certified by the Department.

APHIS works with certified HIOs and licensed DQPs to help ensure the effective identification of sored horses, that proper penalties are imposed, and that the goal of eliminating the practice of soring is achieved. APHIS officials also monitor as many

unaffiliated horse shows (i.e., horse shows that do not hire licensed DQPs) as time and resources allow.

APHIS monitors HIO compliance by reviewing show management, HIO, and DQP reports that are filed with the agency, and by conducting audits of records maintained by the certified DQP programs. APHIS Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO) also attend selected shows and sales to evaluate HIOs' inspection procedures and the performance of individual DQPs.

USDA Inspection Process Training Video

USDA Inspection Process Training Video-Performance Horse

[Responsibilities of Horse Show Management](#)

[Overview of Inspections Conducted under the Horse Protection Act](#)

[Responsibilities of Horse Exhibitors and Transporters under Horse Protection Act](#)

Examination Technology

VMOs may use additional diagnostic technology during their examinations to obtain objective and scientific data to help identify sore horses.

USDA Prohibited Substance Sampling Process Training Video

Enforcement

APHIS may bring administrative or criminal complaints against alleged violators of the HPA. Administrative complaints may result in civil penalties of not more than \$2,000 for each violation, and an order disqualifying the violator from showing or exhibiting horses or otherwise participating in any horse event except as a

spectator. Periods of disqualification are determined on a case-by-case basis but must be no less than 1 year for the first violation and no less than 5 years for any subsequent violations. Civil penalties of up to \$3,000 can be assessed for a violation of an order of disqualification. The Act also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide for the settlement of cases.

The Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015 (Sec. 701 of [Pub. L. 114-74](#)) requires agencies to adjust their civil monetary penalties for inflation annually. These adjustments are reflected in [7 C.F.R. 3.91\(b\)\(2\)](#)(viii) and (ix) and serve to maintain the deterrent effect of civil penalties.

Criminal proceedings may be initiated against individuals who knowingly violate the Act. Criminal penalties include fines of up to \$3,000 and 1 year in prison for a first offense. Each subsequent violation may result in fines of up to \$5,000 and imprisonment for up to 2 years.

[Administrative Law Judge Decisions in HPA Cases](#)

[To view HPA decisions, go to Advanced Search and select Horse Protection Act from the "Act" drop down menu.](#)

[USDA HPA Federal Disqualification and Civil Penalty List](#)

Horse Industry Organization and Designated Qualified Persons

A Designated Qualified Person (DQP) is a person who may be appointed and delegated authority by the management of any horse show, exhibition, or auction, to detect or diagnose horses which are sore or to otherwise inspect horses and records to enforce the HPA.

The USDA does not license DQPs on an individual basis. Licensing of DQPs is accomplished through certified DQP programs maintained by Horse Industry Organizations (HIOs). An HIO is an organized group of people engaged in the promotion of horses through, among other things, the showing, exhibiting, sale, auction, or registration of horses. An HIO must apply to the USDA to certify its DQP Program. The USDA will not certify or will de-certify any DQP Program that is not in compliance with the HPA Regulations.

Licensed DQPs receive inspection assignments to various shows and sales through certified HIOs. While affiliation with a certified HIO and the use of licensed DQPs is not mandatory, most horse show and sale managers choose to use DQPs to reduce

their liability under the Act if a horse is shown or sold while sore. When the management of a show, sale, auction, or exhibition does not affiliate with a certified HIO to secure inspections by a licensed DQP, show management and other responsible individuals are held accountable for any violations of the HPA that occur at the event.

[HIO Certification Process \[Tech Note\]](#)

[List of Certified Horse Industry Organizations](#)

[List of Designated Qualified Person \(DQP\)](#)

[HPA DQP Training Test](#)

Horse Protection Program Reports

Horse Protection Program Show Activity Reports

- [FY24 Event Activity Report](#)
- [FY23 Event Activity Report](#)
- [2022 Show Activity Reports](#)

Horse Protection Program Annual Activity Reports

- [USDA Horse Protection Program FY2022 Activity Report](#)

Additional Information

- [The Horse Protection Act \(Brochure\)](#)

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