



United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and
Plant
Health
Inspection
Service

August 19, 2019

Dear Participants of the 2019 Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration:

Animal
Care
4700 River
Road
Riverdale,
MD 20737

As I transition into the Acting Deputy Administrator position, I wanted to let you know the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) approach to inspections during this year's Celebration will remain unchanged from our approach last year.

Throughout the season, we have monitored for compliance with the Horse Protection Act (HPA) both pre- and post-show by sampling for prohibited substances, conducting digital radiography, measuring equipment, and carrying out standard, hands-on inspections. We will continue to do so moving forward. With regard to post-show inspections at the Celebration, we will request that winners of two places per class (i.e., second and third, or fifth and sixth, etc.) return to the inspection area. As a reminder, here is the guidance we have provided throughout this season involving scar rule and equipment noncompliances.

Scar Rule. With respect to assessing compliance with the scar rule, when USDA officials or designated qualified persons (DQPs) evaluate the posterior aspect of the pastern (the backside), they consider whether there is: (1) tissue that is non-pliable, with hard ridges or nodules with distinct edges that do not flatten, **and** (emphasis added) that is (2) accompanied by generalized or multiple discrete areas of hair loss.

The assessment focus for the anterior (front) and anterior medial and lateral (sides) of the pastern is different. When USDA officials and DQPs assess the anterior and anterior medial and lateral areas, they should be free of any tissue that is non-pliable, with hard ridges or nodules with distinct edges, which does not flatten and is indicative of soring.

At times during pre-show inspections, USDA has identified horses that appear to have substances on their pasterns to camouflage tissue changes. When USDA representatives asked for these horses to return for post-show inspection, scar rule noncompliances were easily identified by both USDA officials and the DQPs. The HPA prohibits the use of substances other than certain lubricants show management makes available after pre-show inspection.

Equipment. This year, USDA continued to invest in learning opportunities aimed at promoting full compliance with the HPA's equipment prohibitions by participating in two open clinics for trainers, exhibitors, and owners, and issuing guidance. Even so, both USDA officials and DQPs continue to identify equipment noncompliances (such as high bands, rough/heavy chains, and shoeing issues involving the 50 percent rule and heel/toe ratio). These noncompliances are 100 percent preventable, so I strongly encourage trainers, exhibitors, and owners to proactively



United States Department of Agriculture

double check all equipment prior to presenting a horse for inspection. Do not wait until you are at the show to address equipment noncompliance issues.

I look forward to working with and getting to know all participants so together we can achieve the HPA's dual purposes of ending soring and promoting fair competition.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Goldentyer

Betty Goldentyer, DVM
Acting Deputy Administrator
Animal Care