

USDA OBSERVATION AT HORSE SHOWS:

What you need to know.

What is going on?

There is a USDA Proposed Rule in its final stages that could ban the use of all pads and action devices on Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses and Spotted Saddle Horses. This rule strengthens the Horse Protection Act of 1970, which applies to **ALL BREEDS OF HORSES**. However, the new USDA Rule is targeted at only those 3 breeds because they have a history of soring. To support the USDA's claim that only those 3 breeds have a history of soring, they need to be able to present evidence that in fact, other breeds are not soring their horses. **Therefore, it is believed that the USDA is attending shows across the country to observe and gather data to support the fact that other breeds do not sore their horses for competitive advantage.** The USDA can attend any show or sale for any breed of horse, regardless of governance or affiliation.

What should you do if they come to a show you are attending?

- 1. BE NICE!** We have nothing to hide, and now is our chance to introduce them to our trotting breeds.
- 2. EDUCATE!** Answer their questions, because they don't understand what they don't know.
- 3. KNOW THESE BEST PRACTICES AND HORSE PROTECTION ACT PROHIBITIONS:**
 - No chains as an action device.
 - Pawing and Kicking Chains – replace the chain with a wooden dowel. The rule states “No chains that have drop links on any horse that is moving about” and this includes in the stall.
 - No more than 1 “action device” on a leg at a time. (Lightweight “Protective Boots” made of rubber or leather are OK and do not count as an action device.)
 - Bands must be a minimum ½” below coronet band and must not be overtightened.
 - Limit the use of stretchers whenever possible to avoid undo questioning.
 - Shin guards, rundowns, standing leg wraps, etc. may bring about questions – just explain it is for protection/support. If they ask you what is under the leg wraps, show them! We have nothing to hide.
 - Tailsets and tail braces are not prohibited, but may raise questions, see #1 and #2.
 - Heel/Toe Ratio – Must have 1” of heel height to 4” of toe length. We keep our horse's shoeing balanced anyway to promote proper cadence, so this should not be an issue.
 - Artificial lengthening of the toe with pads or acrylic should not exceed 50% of the natural hoof length.
 - Yearlings (up to 2 years old): Pads may not elevate or change the angle of the hoof more than 1” at the heel, and shoes may not weigh more than 16 oz.
- 4. DON'T SCRATCH!** The show office will be asked to provide a list of trainers and exhibitors, and will also request a list of scratches. It is common in the TWH industry for trainers to scratch all their entries and go home when the USDA is present, and they view that as a warning sign. *Show your horses!* We have nothing to hide.
- 5. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY!** They are attending shows to gather data to support the fact that Trotting Breeds do not sore our horses. This can work to our advantage and set our industry up for a successful relationship with the USDA moving forward.