

USDA - "Act of Soring" & Regulations



"Act of Soring" - The **INTENTIONAL**:

- Application of a blistering agent
- Infliction of a burn/cut/laceration
- Injection of any tack/nail/screw into a horse's limb

The result of which causes the horse to suffer physical pain or distress, inflammation or lameness.

ESC Show Officials qualify for NASO \$6M/\$14M Liability Insurance for HPA "Bad Call" Disqualifications

New Regulations - What you need to know:

- Maximum shod length = 1.5 x length of natural hoof (ex: 4" natural hoof + 2" pad/shoe = 6" overall)
- Heel height must be AT LEAST 1" shorter than overall toe length, but there is no minimum.
- No chains
- No Action Device or Boot over 6oz
- Only one Action Device on a leg at a time
- Bands 1/2" below bottom of the coronet band (use 1" to be safe)
- No caustic agents (including DMSO) or products to cover or change the hair color may be used on the horse's legs.
- ESC Med Report - Required when acrylic is used in instances of hoof wall repair or non-compliant heel/toe ratios.

USDA - Heel/Toe Ratio & Therapeutic Shoeing



“Heel/Toe Ratio”



Therapeutic exemptions to the requirements under §11.6 solely to comply with breed guidelines will not be accepted.

- **50% Rule** - Length of NATURAL HOOF must be twice the length of PAD & SHOE (4" natural hoof + 2" pad/shoe = 6" overall)
- **HEEL/TOE RATIO** - Overall height of heel must be AT LEAST 1" shorter than total overall length.
- **ARTIFICIAL EXTENSION OF TOE LENGTH**, accomplished with pads or acrylics, may not exceed 50% of natural hoof length. (Use ESC med form / vet report for therapeutic shoeing.)

Animal Care Tech Note

Events Covered by the Horse Protection Act

The Horse Protection Act (HPA) makes it unlawful for any person to show, exhibit, sell, or transport sore horses, or to use prohibited equipment or substances in these activities. The HPA covers horse exhibition and shows, which includes public display of horses whether or not they are in competition. The HPA also covers horse sales and auctions whether or not the horses for sale are publicly displayed as part of the sale.

Races or other events where speed is the prime factor are not covered. Rodeo events, parades, and trail rides are also excluded from the HPA. The following charts provide examples of common events and whether they are regulated under the HPA. It is important to remember that these charts are only guidance, and the determining factor for a specific event not already under another exclusion is whether or not speed is the prime factor in scoring.

This tech note provides guidance to help you determine whether an activity is covered by the HPA.

The HPA only covers members of the species *Equus caballus*. That means the HPA does not apply to donkeys, mules, or exotic equids like zebra.

Examples of Events Covered by the HPA

Event	Reason
Cart/Driving	Based on score
Costume Class	Based on score
Dressage	Based on score
Equitation, Flat Classes, Pleasure	Based on score
Halter/Showmanship at Halter	Based on score
Hunter	Based on score
Hunter Under Saddle	Based on score
Polo	Based on score
Ranch Horse Versatility	Based on score
Ranch Riding	Based on score
Reining	Based on score
Trail Classes	Based on score
Vaulting	Based on score



Examples of Events Not Covered by the HPA

Event	Reason
Barrel Racing	Speed is the prime factor/rodeo event
Cross Country	Speed is the prime factor
Endurance	Speed is the prime factor
Gymkhana	Speed is the prime factor
Horse Racing	Speed is the prime factor
Mounted Shooting	Speed is the prime factor
Show Jumping	Speed is the prime factor
Speed Coach Races	Speed is the prime factor
Steeplechasing	Speed is the prime factor
Reined Cowhorse	Rodeo event
Working Cowhorse	Rodeo event
Working Cow Horse	Rodeo event
Boxing Only	

The HPA establishes the legal requirements that must be followed. For details, refer to the HPA (United States Code Title 15, Chapter 44, Sections 1821-1831) and the Horse Protection Regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, 9 CFR Title 9, Chapter I, Subchapter A, Part 11).

More Information

For more information, contact us at horseprotection@usda.gov.

EQUINE Sports Council

Trotting Breeds

SHOW HORSE TROTTING BREEDS

American Saddlebred
Arabian
Dutch Harness Horse
Friesian
Hackney
Morgan
Standardbred Roadster



American Saddlebred

SPORT HORSE TROTTING DISCIPLINES

Combined Driving
Dressage
Hunter/Jumper



Hunter/Jumper

- **The natural gait of these Show Horses and Sport Horses is the TROT** - a diagonal gait where one front foot and the opposite hind foot strike the ground at the same time.
- **A trotting horse cannot move soundly if it is lame or sore.**
- **All Show Horse Trotting Breeds are judged at the Trot.**
- The Five Gaited American Saddlebred, that also performs the Slow Gait and Rack, is required to demonstrate proper cadence and balance at the Trot. **It is therefore counterproductive to sore a Trotting Breed horse**, which is why the Trotting Breeds have never been found to be sore, or subject to inspections under the Horse Protection Act.



Visit this link for more information about the
Show Horse Trotting Breeds.

TrottingBreeds.org

EQUINE Sports Council

A non-member organization serving the horse show industry by creating a network of shows across the country that all follow the same guidelines.

WE RECOGNIZE A NEED FOR HORSE SHOWS TO HAVE:

- Clear Rules and Standards
- An impartial third party dispute resolution process.
- Optional Drug Testing that fits our breeds & disciplines.
- Increased level of Official's Insurance

WE KNOW PARTICIPANTS WANT:

- To know that a show will meet certain criteria and follow standard guidelines.
- A level playing field.
- A safe environment for both human and equine athletes.

SO WE ARE AN ORGANIZATION THAT:

- Has no mandatory membership.
- Supports horse show participants and organizers.
- Reinvests profits back into the breeds and disciplines within our Network.
- Offers Horse Show Sanctioning built BY people in the show horse industry, FOR people in the show horse industry.

RULES & STANDARDS

It's a fact that in today's litigious society, both horse shows and participants need clearly stated standards and guidelines.

ESC was founded to provide horse show sanctioning that is relevant to our breeds and disciplines. We offer:

- Clear, simply stated General Rules and Guidelines.
- Class Specifications and Judging Standards
- No Application Fee for a horse show to join the Network.
- No membership numbers to check.
- Exhibitors pay a \$15 fee per Performance horse and \$5 fee per Academy rider, billed per back number and collected by the show.
- The 3-member Show Commission has the authority to enforce the rules and sanction participants.
- In the event of a challenge, ESC provides a third-party dispute resolution process.
- ESC provides assistance collecting bad debts.
- **25% of the ESC fees collected will be given as a grant back to the horse show.**

DRUG TESTING

Equine Sports Council offers optional drug testing to horse shows. Testing specifically targets performance enhancing drugs and offers allowable limits for therapeutic drugs.

Fee Structure for Drug Testing:

- \$250 Set Up Fee charged to the horse show.
- \$10 Drug Testing Fee charged to each Performance horse entered.
- Based on the budget, a random sampling of horses will be tested to ensure a level playing field.
- Any horse at any show may be tested if there is a welfare concern.

OFFICIALS INSURANCE

We have partnered with the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) to offer insurance to horse show officials: Judges, Stewards and Members of the Show Commission.

The Officials Insurance covers any horse show, exhibition or clinic in the USA or Canada.

All levels of competition are covered from Academy Tournaments to National and World Championship events. This 12 month policy with NASO can be purchased via ESC for \$124/yr and includes the following coverage:

- \$6 Million per incident
- \$14 Million aggregate
- \$100,000 Errors & Omissions per dispute
- \$15,500 personal physical assault
- Liable & Slander Protections
- NASO Legal Counseling

This coverage is offered COMPLIMENTARY to any Judge officiating at an ESC horse show.



Equine Sports Council's primary objectives are to educate, advocate and reinvest in the show horse industry. To encourage support of those goals, we are pleased to announce the formation of a non-profit charitable subsidiary, the **ESC Foundation**.

OUR PURPOSE

The Equine Sports Council Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and promotion of the **Show Horse Trotting Breeds**.

OUR MISSION

- To raise public awareness and understanding of the show horse trotting breeds through education and advocacy.
- To foster harmonious relations between horse shows and exhibitors through education, consistency in rules and regulations, and emphasis on equine health and safety.
- To provide accessible educational resources, foster positive relationships between horse enthusiasts, trainers, and the public, and support the responsible care and training of show horses and the art of horsemanship.

Visit EquineSportsCouncil.org
or call us @ 855-EQUINE1
for more information about our
horse show sanctioning and to
JOIN OUR NETWORK.

(Insert Date)

(Your Congress Member's info)

RE: Horse Protection Act

Dear Representative/Senator (Last Name):

In May 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published new Horse Protection Act (HPA) rules, which will be implemented and enforced in February 2025. The new rules have expanded the scope of the HPA far beyond its original intent when it was voted into law in 1970.

The new language amounts to an egregious overreach, impacting the personal privacy of US Citizens involved in the horse industry, every breed of horse, and every sector of competition - from youth events like 4H and small community horse shows, to larger association events that occur annually on regional and national levels. We are standing at the precipice of a situation that, left unchecked, could irreparably damage the horse industry, which provides over \$122 billion in total annual economic impact in the United States.

These regulations were written by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The claimed goal of the new language is to stop 'soring'. However, **there is no evidence of or reason for horses that preform at the TROT** (a two-beat diagonal gait, naturally occurring in 70% of horse breeds) **to engage in the Act of Soring, as doing so would produce an undesirable and incorrect cadence at the trot that would be severely penalized in the show ring.** Not only is there no incentive to sore a trotting breed horse, there is strong disincentive to do so. For more information about show horse Trotting Breeds, visit <https://equinesportscouncil.org/trottingbreeds/>.

If implemented, the greatly expanded HPA enforcement will consume millions of taxpayer dollars for a completely unnecessary government program. The expanded language is especially egregious because 'soring' has never been a practice outside a small horse industry segment.

According to the American Horse Council, there are 50,000+ equine events nationwide. It is unlikely that APHIS has the budget to train the thousands of licensed Horse Protection Inspectors (HPIs) needed to cover all the existing shows. APHIS estimates costs to be over \$1000 per HPI per day and event producers would absorb this cost. As a result, it will become impractical to hold most equine events across the United States, especially those involving youth and smaller communities. Additionally, the language states that HPIs are allowed unrestricted access to all areas of barns, horse trailers, stalls, arenas, and other show, exhibition, or sale or auction grounds, or related areas at any horse show, exhibition, sale, or auction to inspect all horses, at any time.

As a stakeholder in the horse industry directly impacted by this new enforcement language, we respectfully request the following considerations:

- Association involvement in USDA and APHIS rulemaking as it impacts the entire horse industry.
- Complete review and true economic impact analysis, including review of economic impact to American taxpayers of the new proposed rules with input from key horse industry Associations.
- Changing the new language of the HPA to reflect its original intent, which was to eliminate the intentional soring of Tennessee Walking Horses and Racking Horses in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and response to my request.

Sincerely,

CHAPTER 7 - WELFARE

Equine Sports Council has a zero tolerance policy towards individuals who put the welfare of animals and/or humans at risk. It is against US Federal law for individuals to witness or participate in the activities that comprise the Welfare of Humans or Animals and not report it to government authorities.

Nothing in these rules shall prohibit show management from refusing entries or prohibiting attendance by persons, to the extent that such refusal or prohibition does not conflict with applicable state or federal law.

WL701 Show Safety Reporting & Suspension Policy

1. **Harassment** of any kind is illegal in every state and must be reported immediately by calling 911. State and federal police are the only institutions legally permitted to investigate and convict those who commit these types of crimes. To understand what constitutes harassment or assault review these educational videos: <https://EquineSportsCouncil.org/safe>
2. **Bullying** by individuals or corporations either active, passive or cyber is not tolerated at any ESC event. 46 of the 50 US states have anti-bullying laws. If you are the witness or victim of bullying at an ESC governed show, please notify the Show Commission or ESC at 1-855-Equine1. For confidential help or advice with bullying issues, StompOutBullying.org is the national nonprofit help center.
3. **Animal Cruelty** - Is generally defined as the act of inflicting pain or suffering to a non-human animal and can be done intentionally or by omission. Prohibited treatment of horses at an ESC event is explained in the sections below. Immediately notify any suspected issues to horse show management, and notify authorities by calling 911 if an animal's life is at risk due to unaddressed animal cruelty.
4. **State Sex Offender Registry** - Any person currently listed on any state's sex offender registry is prohibited from attending ESC sanctioned horse shows, whether as a spectator, exhibitor, trainer, coach, groom, or as any other participant.
5. **Criminal Convictions** - Any person who is currently serving a sentence, probation, or on parole for convictions involving violent offenses, sexual offenses, intentional physical harm, animal abuse, or animal cruelty is prohibited from attending ESC sanctioned horse shows, whether as a spectator, exhibitor, trainer, coach, groom, or as any other participant.
6. **Plus 5 Year Suspension** - Any person who, in the past five years, has served a sentence, whether custodial or not, been on probation, or been on parole for convictions involving violent offenses, sexual offenses, intentional physical harm, animal abuse or animal cruelty is prohibited from attending ESC sanctioned horse shows, whether as a spectator, exhibitor, trainer, coach, groom, or as any other participant.

Procedures:

1. Upon report that a participant may be prohibited by any of the foregoing policies, ESC will make reasonable investigation to determine the accuracy of the report.
2. ESC will notify all Show Managers of ESC sanctioned competitions of those prohibited from attendance.
3. ESC does not make any determinations of criminal conduct and relies solely on state and federal court adjudications and government-maintained offender registries.
4. ESC horse shows may continue to refuse entries or ban any person for any or no reason at all. All ESC shows will be asked to mutually adhere to this suspension list and required to honor the USDA Act of Soring disqualifications list.