Equine Welfare Issues:
A closer look at two industries --
Racing and The Tennessee Walking Horse

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First, a quick look at the AAEP…

• Founded in 1954
• Veterinarians & Vet Students
• International Scope
• 10,000 current members
What do we do?

• Continuing Education
• Member services
• Advocacy
• Foundation
• Industry Involvement
• Student Programs
• Horse Owner Education
Why do we do it?

“To improve the health and welfare of the horse, to further the professional development of its members, and to provide resources and leadership for the benefit of the equine industry” – AAEP Mission Statement
Decades after Slew, Affirmed, Secretariat and Ruffian, the world is a changed place.
Three more breakdowns seen on TV

1990: Go for Wand
2006: Barbaro
2008: Eight Belles
Racing in today’s culture

- Reduced popularity
  - ↓ # starts, # race days, handle, attendance
    - Aging fan base

- Public concern about medications, breakdowns
  - Questions about drugs in all sports
Racing in Media 2012

Breakdowns at US tracks

Dermorphan—”frog juice”
2012: “Death and Disarray at America’s Racetracks”
Current Racing Welfare Issues

- Medication
- The “At Risk” racehorse
- Retirement options
Clinical Guidelines for Veterinarians Practicing in a Pari-Mutuel Environment

**Putting the Horse First:**
Veterinary Recommendations for the Safety and Welfare of the Standardbred Racehorse

**Putting the Horse First:**
Veterinary Recommendations for the Safety and Welfare of the Thoroughbred Racehorse

**Putting the Horse First:**
Veterinary Recommendations for the Safety and Welfare of the Quarter Horse Racehorse

http://www.aaep.org/equine_welfare.htm
Medication-General public thinks:

- Drugs = cheating
- Drugs = performance enhancement
- Drugs = breakdowns

Veterinarians are “Both Doctor and Drugstore”
Medication -
The AAEP supports:

- Uniform medication rules
  - based on science
- Uniform testing procedures
  - RMTC Certified labs
- Uniform penalties
  - strict punishment for repeat offenses or prohibited substances
- Allowing Salix on raceday
  - therapeutic medication for EIPH
Coming Together in 2013

American Association of Equine Practitioners
Uniform Medication Rule Goals

- Allow reasonable levels of therapeutic medications (TM)
- *Defined, uniform* TM withdrawal times before race
- Clarify *prohibited* substances
Uniform Medication Rule Goals

- Uniform testing in small # accredited labs
- Strict, objective, serious penalties
- Highest crimes = longest times
Uniform Medication Rule Goals

- If jurisdiction allows furosemide (Salix™) on raceday, official veterinarians will administer

- Rules on therapies like extracorporeal shock wave, icing spelled out.
Challenges

- Many trainers, some veterinarians want permissive medication
- General public still favors NO medication
Racehorses “At Risk” for Injury

- Risks related to medication?
- Risks related to purse structure in claiming races?
- Risks related to racing surface?
- Risks with various training practices?
- Other risks?

Injury risk is MULTIFACTORIAL
Injury Reduction?

- Screening for pre-existing injury; best practices to identify “at risk” horses
- Uniform medication rules on therapeutic substances and intra-articular injections
Injury Reduction?

- Injury analysis
  - Necropsy protocols after catastrophic injuries
  - Equine injury database

- Increased education for owners, trainers and veterinarians
  - TOBA seminars
  - AAEP sponsored events

- Cap purse structure for horses racing at low levels
Recent initiatives

- NYRWB Task Force looked at Racehorse Health and Safety at Aqueduct
  - New York Racing Emergency Rules

- California Racing Safety Program
  - Necropsy of all fatalities
  - Track safety program

- Research
  - Grayson Jockey Club
  - Numerous university projects
Challenges

- Injuries are multifactorial
- Science on ways to reduce them is limited
- Breakdowns will NEVER be eliminated
Retirement options

- Large increase in # retirement facilities
- Numerous success stories
  - Breeding
  - Eventing, Dressage, Jumping, Foxhunting
  - Western events
  - Pleasure, Therapeutic, etc
- Many trainers love TBs
  - Hot trend to “buy American”
AAEP resources

Care Guidelines
FOR EQUINE RESCUE AND RETIREMENT FACILITIES

American Association of Equine Practitioners

TRANSITIONING THE RETIRED RACEHORSE
Guidelines for Equine Practitioners, Adoption Organizations and Horse Owners

http://www.aaep.org/equine_welfare.htm
Thoroughbreds

- Unwanted Horse Coalition  
  http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org/
- Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance  
  http://thoroughbredaftercare.com/
- Thoroughbred Incentive Program (Jockey Club)  
  http://tjctip.com/
- Thoroughbred Connect (Jockey Club)  
- Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Adoption Program  
  http://www.fingerlakestap.org/
- Retired Racehorse Training Project  
  http://www.retiredracehorsetraining.org/
  - 100 day challenge for Tbs
  - Fair Hill Thoroughbreds for All – October 2012
Standardbreds and Quarter Horses

- Unwanted Horse Coalition
- Standardbred Safety Net,
- USTA Full Circle Program
- AQHA Full Circle Program
  [http://aqha.com/About/Content-Pages/About-the-Association/Full-Circle.aspx](http://aqha.com/About/Content-Pages/About-the-Association/Full-Circle.aspx)
- AQHA “Second Go” program
- AQHA “America’s Horse Cares” program
  [http://aqha.com/Foundation/Content-Pages/Therapeutic-Riding/The.aspx](http://aqha.com/Foundation/Content-Pages/Therapeutic-Riding/The.aspx)
Challenges

- Some horses can not be rehabilitated due to injury
- Some horses are not safe to transition to new careers
- Triage is essential
Challenges

- Funding
- Neglect and abuse in some rescues
- Never enough homes for all the retired racehorses
Soring in Walking Horses
Brief History of the Big Lick

- **1940’s-50’s**—TW surged in popularity, esp. in South
  - “Big Lick”—everyone wanted it!

- **1950’s-60’s**—Short cuts developed
  - Shoes, weights, pads
  - Chains
  - Caustic chemicals
Shortcuts = SORING

- Application, insertion or injection of any substance or material on or into a limb, or manipulation of the limb that causes pain, distress, inflammation or lameness.

- Can be done with chemicals, shoes, pads, chains, or other hardware alone or in combination. Can also be done with hoof shaping.
“Performance Packages”

- Pads, “stacks”, bolts, or heel springs affixed to hoof
  - Pads up to 4” at heel, 2” at toe
  - Often weighted
  - Strapped on by metal bands

- Currently unregulated
“Action Devices”

• Bracelet like chains or rollers
  – Steel, aluminum, wood
  – Circle front pasterns
  – Cause pain when very heavy or if skin is inflamed

• Currently one per limb allowed
  – Must be ≤ 6 ounces,
Chemical Irritants

- Caustic chemicals applied to pastern; chains increase pain.
  - Pain causes exaggerated gait rewarded in show ring

- Kerosene, diesel, mustard or croton oil, hand cleaner, WD 40, etc.

- Illegal, but in widespread use
Physical soring

- Trimming down to sensitive sole or removing supporting hoof wall
- Inducing laminitis
- Adding weight to pads, or inserting hard objects between pad and sole
- Overtightening of bands holding “packages”
Signs of soring?

- Standing with feet close, shifting weight to hind legs
- Irritated, scarred or dark skin on pasterns
- Resistance of hoof handling or pastern palpation
- Lying down a lot, reluctance to rise
- Difficulty walking
Horse Protection Act (HPA)

- **1970:** Horse Protection Act
  - Soring ILLEGAL, fines set
  - Soring not allowed in shows, sales or exhibits

- **1976:** HPA amendment
  - DQP program
  - USDA oversight of DQPs
  - DQPs licensed by HIO (horse industry orgs)
Inspection process

- Visual observation of gait and stance
- Physical inspection and palpation
- Swabbing of pastern (2006)
  - Gas chromatography
  - Mass spectrometry
  - “Sniffer” technology used in airport security
Technology

• Digital Radiography
  – Detects laminitis, weights in pads, objects under sole
  – Instant feedback at show

• Thermography
  – Detectable temperature signature after soring
  – Future objective test
So what’s the problem?

- Industry has failed to police itself.
  - Uncooperative with USDA enforcement efforts

- Soring continues at “fun shows” and big shows.
  - 8-9% of all horses at 2011 + 2012 Celebrations cited

A sored gait is still rewarded in the show ring.
More history...

- 2006: Swabbing begins
  - high # positives found.
- 2008: AAEP white paper on “Ending Soring”*
- 2010: USDA Office of Atty G. reports HPA oversight inadequate.
  - Faults DQP “self policing” program.
- 2012: Video of abuse goes viral
  - Escalates public concern
  - Big fines, criminal indictment of trainer

*AAEP Paper: http://www.aaep.org/equine_welfare.htm
Despite >40 years of the HPA, the Industry has failed to eliminate soring.

- 2012: Congress votes 696K for HPA enforcement
- June 2012: Joint call from AAEP and AVMA to BAN action devices and “performance packages
April 2013: “PAST” ACT—HR 1518 “Prevent All Soring Tactics”

If passed, HR 1518 would amend the HPA to:

- **BAN** “Performance packages” (weighted shoes, wedges, hoof bands)
- **BAN** “Action devices”

Apply *only* to Tennessee Walkers, Spotted Saddle horses and Racking horses
Consequences of HR 1518

- Suspensions range 6 mo to 3 yrs, or permanent if ≥3 violations
- Soring conviction = criminal record, fines, possible jail time
  - Show managers, sponsoring orgs also liable
- USDA would license, train assign and oversee ALL inspectors.
Other welfare issues

- Processing plants might open again in the US
- Horse DNA residues found in “beef” sold in Europe, UK
- Unwanted horses—high numbers persist
- Equitarian work around the globe
- Medication excesses in performance horse world
- Carriage Horse Industry
- Wild Horse & Burro Program
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