

Equine Committee Report

2013 NIAA Annual Conference

Tuesday, April 16, 2013



The Equine Committee met on Tuesday, April 16, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. during the 2013 NIAA Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky with about 22 people present. Dr. Carl Heckendorf and Dr. Tom Lenz served as Co-Chairs.

This committee session focused on equine welfare and the unwanted horse.

The following speakers presented:

Dr. Thomas Lenz, DVM, Senior Director, Equine Technical Services, presented “Equine Welfare, Where Fact and Emotion Collide.”

- The unwanted horse situation is a very complicated and involved problem. Many different opinions exist in a situation where there might not be an absolute right answer.
- Significantly, science is not always the driver for the unwanted horse or for that matter animal welfare in general. One survey indicated that when animal welfare was concerned HSUS was the most credible source of information followed by veterinarians who were tied with PETA.
- Welfare is based on knowledge and life’s experiences. For example, he and his wife are both veterinarians – he is from a farming background where his horses were always out on pasture and she owned horses that were in a boarding stable that stalled and blanketed horses every day. He stated that every week he and his wife have a discussion as to whether or not the horses should be blanketed and stalled when there is a storm. This is an example of two very knowledgeable people with two different opinions.
- Dr. Lenz also discussed the BLM wild horse issue. It cost \$43 million a year to keep these mustangs in sanctuaries. There is an additional 34,000 horses on the range doubling every four to five years.
- The average individual who donates to animal welfare does it for emotion. They are well meaning but have little knowledge of the overall issue.
- Science determines risk society determines acceptability. Society looks at moral and ethical aspects not science.
- The take home message was that we need to accept other people’s values and find common ground to solve the problem. We need to communicate with each other.

Ms. Ericka Caslin, Director, Unwanted Horse Coalition, American Horse Council, presented “The Unwanted Horse Coalition: Working Towards Solutions.”

- Goals of the Unwanted Horse Coalition are to:
 1. Educate people on the issue of unwanted horse
 2. Reduce the number of unwanted horses
 3. Educate people to seek a solution
 4. Find ways to decrease the number of unwanted horses

- They have an extensive website with many educational materials. Also included on the webpage are ways to become involved with the whole process of dealing with unwanted horses. They are linked to 400 horse rescues, feed banks, castration programs, euthanasia assistance and full circle programs.
- They also promote a book on how to start and manage a horse rescue. They have provided assistance for 684 castrations at \$50 apiece. They also host a universal website for rescues to advertise the horses that they have up for adoption. In addition they have “Steps to Do” section that provides:
 1. How to pick a designated person for your group to deal with informational and organizational material
 2. Education and website development material
 3. Educational material for owners with the full circle process in mind
 4. How to start a support and care facility
 5. How to become a non-profit
 6. Direct assistance
 7. Funding

Mr. David Foley, CAE, Executive Director, American Association of Equine Practitioners, presented “Equine Welfare Issues – A Look at Two Aspects of the Industry: Horse Racing & the Tennessee Walking Horse.”

- Mr. Foley talked on two major issues. One was the welfare concerns with the racing industry and two was the soring issue on the “Big Lick” horses, principally the Tennessee Walking horses.
- The racing industry topics that he discussed were injuries, medication and retirement. He stated that there needs to be uniform medication rules between the states. He gave an example that the Green Bay Packers do not have to abide by a different set of rules when playing the Broncos in Denver as compared to playing the Vikings in Minnesota. The fact that veterinarians are the doctor as well as the drug store leads to a perception problem. Injuries are always common as it is a strenuous sport. Methods to address track surfaces and injury prevention need to be pursued. Many states have better retirement programs than others. Retirement is a significant aspect of public perception.
- The soring situation was addressed in 1970 with the Horse Protection Act. It was amended in 1976. The industry was tasked with monitoring itself. They have failed to meet this responsibility. Originally, the HPA was funded with \$500,000 annually. The funding was insufficient for USDA to check many shows. Consequently, sored horse left the shows when the inspectors were in attendance and the industry officials would not enforce the rules. Presently, AAEP and AVMA have put forth position statements and USDA have new rules in place.
- Some people indicate that the “Big Lick” cannot be accomplished without soring.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- Resolutions EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ6, and EQ9 were reaffirmed.
- EQ5 was amended to add: “Encourage change of ownership testing in all states.”
- The background of EQ7 was amended to add: EHV-1 to the list of diseases. The resolution was amended to state “NIAA recommends that all horses tested for the above diseases be identified with an International Organizational Standard (ISO) 11784 and 11785 (134.2 kHz) and develop a data base to store the records of those diseases.”

- EQ8 was not reaffirmed.

General Discussion: None

Committee Session adjourned at 12:30 p.m.