



Soring Abuse News and Initiatives

by Lori Northrup, President of
Friends of Sound Horses (FOSH)

There certainly has been some interesting news coming our way from the Tennessee Walking Horse world. First, William and Sandra Johnson were put on one-year suspension for all of 2011 by the USDA for violating the Horse Protection Act, including “financing others to show.” On the Waterfall Farm website, the farm owned by the Johnsons is described as “an industry showplace for more than a decade” standing a line-up of over 12 World Grand Championship stallions. The suspension of this wealthy, influential couple is major news, and articles around the horse world have reported on this.

Just on the heels of that news, a Federal Grand Jury in Tennessee indicted Barney Davis and two others on charges of horse soring, falsifying records and an entire conspiracy which could carry a maximum jail sentence of three years in prison. This might be the first indictment with criminal charges since the Horse Protection Act was put in place in 1970. There are rumors of several more federal indictments expected in 2011, so this is good news for those wishing that the abuses of soring had more serious enforcement consequences.

Soring abuses, which involve causing pain to a gaited horse's front feet and pasterns to create the exaggerated, high-stepping gait rewarded in some shows, have been federally illegal since 1970, but are often still culturally acceptable. The exposure and publicity of soring is causing distress within the traditional Tennessee Walking Horse Industry. Further unrest is coming from the expected decertification of certain HIOs (Horse Industry Organizations who inspect shows under a USDA-granted license) that have refused to honor USDA-required penalties, fighting and distrust between some HIOs and show groups, and uncertainty in the financial futures and leadership stability of these organizations.

The trainers, owners and exhibitors that are focused on a more naturally-moving, sound Tennessee Walking Horse are experiencing an upsurge in business and shows where the horses' natural smooth gaits can be appreciated. Not only are these sound training methods legal, but they are considered humane by America's horse-loving population. ♡

For more information:

More information on soring is available at www.stopsoring.com or by visiting the Sound Horse Conference website. Plans are being outlined for the next Sound Horse Conference, being considered for November 2 & 3, 2012, in Nashville, Tennessee. These initiatives are sponsored in part by FOSH, Friends of Sound Horses, that is a national leader in the promotion of natural, sound gaited horses and in the fight against abuse and soring of Tennessee Walking Horses. For more information about FOSH or to become a member, please visit www.fosh.info or call 1-800-651-7993. Volunteers are always welcomed to work on many projects and initiatives to end soring and support sound gaited horses.

About the author:

Lori Northrup has bred, trained and ridden naturally-gaited Tennessee Walking Horses for over 30 years, and is a Parelli Natural Horsemanship Instructor. She serves as the President of FOSH, Friends of Sound Horses, a national non-profit group focused on ending the soring abuses to gaited show horses, and promoting sound, humane education and show venues. www.goldenstride.com