

Horse Abuse: Soring Fact Sheet



Sole bruising as caused by "pressure shoeing." This can be achieved by paring down the live tissue until it bleeds, nailing metal objects like screws under horse shoes to cause pain with every step, or injecting urethane that hardens into a painful force against the foot.

What is Soring?

Soring is deliberately causing pain on the front legs or feet of a horse to create an exaggerated, high-stepping gait.

Why are horses sored?

To gain a competitive edge and win a ribbon in the show ring.

Is soring illegal?

Yes, soring is illegal under federal law. The Horse Protection Act (HPA), passed in 1970, prohibits soring because it is cruel and inhumane. Soring changes the performance of horses to compete unfairly with horses which are not sore; thus the showing, exhibition, transportation or public sale of sore horses is federally illegal.



Caustic chemicals (diesel fuel, kerosene, industrial cleaners) are often painted on the horse's front legs, then wrapped with plastic wrap and bandages and left to "cook" into the skin for days to make the leg tender when the chain bangs against it with every step.

If soring is illegal, why does it still exist?

There are numerous reasons why soring still exists:

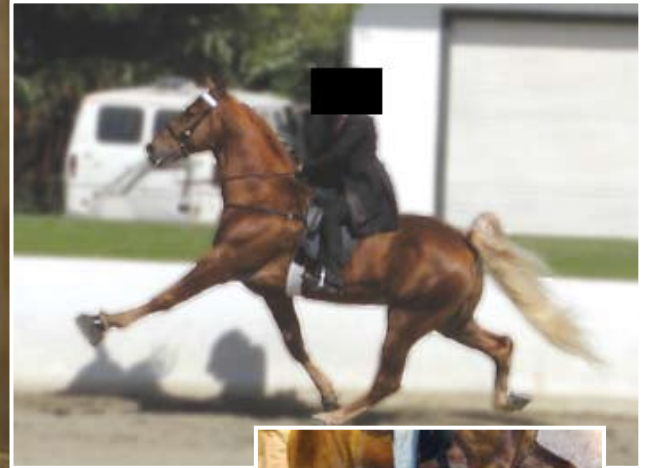
- The USDA, charged with HPA enforcement, has been severely hampered in its duty because its annual budget for enforcement has remained static at \$500,000 since 1976, with no inflationary increases.
- Because the USDA can only afford to attend less than 10% of all shows, Horse Industry Organizations (HIOs) also inspect horses before they enter the show ring. These HIOs are fraught with conflicts of interest. Many times, the inspector, known as a Designated Qualified Person (DQP) may be the exhibitor's relative, friend, or customer, or expect a favor in return for passing a sore horse.



The "performance horse package" is nailed to the horse's foot: the horse shoe, stacks, pads, and metal bands tightened against the hoof. The horse lives in a stall in this package 24/7 during its show career years, and has chains added daily for training and showing.

- Judges select sored horses as winners. This increases the value of these horses and the motivation to sore a horse to increase the chances of winning. Often the judges themselves have HPA violations.
- Punishment is lax. Instead of increasing penalties for repeat violators, penalties are expunged from a violator's records. Multiple violations may carry very light punishment such as suspension for only a few weeks or months.
- HIOs allow violators to appeal their violations, and many violations disappear.

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Above and Right Photos: These are the types of exaggerated, high-stepping gaits rewarded by the judges.

- The USDA does not publish the total list of violators, so the public is unable to determine the extent of the soring problem.
- People involved in soring are vocal and have repeatedly threatened the USDA inspectors at shows. Now the USDA requires armed security (federal marshals, state troopers, etc.) to ensure their safety at many shows.
- Some members of Congress have threatened the USDA with reduced funding and terminations if the USDA vigorously enforces the Horse Protection Act.

What would have the biggest impact on eliminating soring?

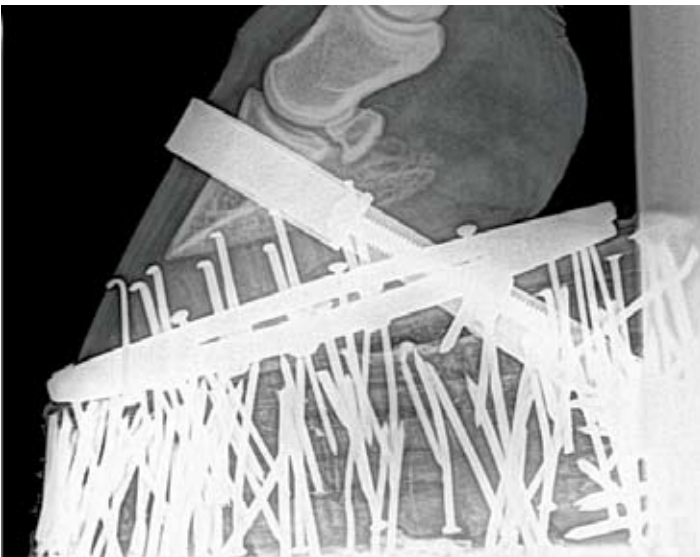
An increase in the USDA annual budget. Inflation-adjusting the original amount would provide \$2.7 million in 2009 dollars. Funding for USDA inspectors to attend 100% of the Tennessee Walking Horse Shows would be about \$7 million.



Illegal scarring caused by chains and caustic chemicals during training.

Contacts to learn more about the battle to end the abuse of soring:

- Friends of Sound Horses (FOSH): www.fosh.info
- www.stopsoring.com
- United States Department of Agriculture, (USDA) Horse Protection: www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/hp
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS): www.hsus.org/horses_equines/tennessee_walking_horse.html



A radiograph of a shoeing package with surplus nails added to increase the weight carried by the horse's hoof.