

For Immediate Release

AQHA Continues Focus on Animal Welfare Issues

America's Horse, January 13, 2009 – The American Quarter Horse Association's Executive Committee has approved the Animal Welfare Assurance Task Force recommendations, and the Association is moving forward to implement the suggestions. The Association's main objectives are to educate members and the general public on animal welfare issues and identify and eliminate any inhumane training practices that might currently be perceived as acceptable while strengthening sanctions for noncompliance.

AQHA's Animal Welfare Assurance Task Force met in the fall in Amarillo to discuss issues facing the industry and ways to continue protecting the American Quarter Horse and other equines.

Gathering members from all aspects of the industry brought a wealth of knowledge and experience together to ensure many views were represented. Members of the task force included veterinarians, industry leaders, trainers, representatives from equine organizations, and individuals representing racing, showing and recreational riding. Clark Bradley; Dave Brian; Joe Carter; Doug Corey, D.V.M.; Eleanor Green, D.V.M.; Jim Helzer; Connie Hill; Bill Horton; Paul Jones; Nancy Goodman McIlwraith, D.V.M.; Scott Myers, D.V.M.; Tammy Pate; Carol Rose; Bennie Sargent; Dorvan Solberg; Johnny Trotter; Sandy Vaughn; and Rick Weaver served on the task force.

"The welfare of American Quarter Horses has always been of paramount importance to AQHA," said Bill Brewer, AQHA executive vice president. "In 2009, we are renewing our commitment to American Quarter Horses and all other animal welfare issues as they relate to American Quarter Horses. Our horses deserve our best. The responsibility of caring for the American Quarter Horse should always be a top priority."

Educational efforts on animal welfare have already begun and include the following: A link to AQHA's animal welfare policy statement is featured on the *aqha.com* home page. An article on AQHA's animal welfare efforts, task force recommendations and a request for a concerted effort from AQHA Professional Horsemen to ensure the humane treatment of horses and acceptable training practices will be in the January 2009 Professional Horsemen's newsletter. A rules committee met in conjunction with the December Judges Conference in Irving, Texas, to review and make recommendations on roping, working cow horse and reining rules in relation to acceptable training and class procedures. The group also made recommendations on excessive or abusive treatment rules related to other disciplines, which will be sent to the Show Committee for consideration at the annual Convention. New judging cards have been printed to include space for the judge to indicate any disqualifications for abusive practices in the show arena.

The following has been approved by the AQHA Executive Committee:

ACTION PLAN FOR RACING:

1. Maintain existing relationships with National Thoroughbred Racing Association, Racing Medication and Testing Consortium, Jockey Club Welfare and Safety Summit, Association of Racing Commissioners International Model Rules Program, etc. providing AQHA has a seat at the table to ensure consistency in animal welfare policies and regulations.
2. Communicate via AQHA publications, e-newsletters, race track daily programs, in-house TV and Web sites about racing's continued efforts to ensure the welfare of horses is paramount. Work through AQHA Public Policy Committee, state affiliates, state legislative initiatives (Texas HORSE) and specialists to influence public opinion.
3. Correspond with state racing commissions and NTRA communicating the objectives listed below with regard to animal welfare:
 - Advocate the use of safe equipment
 - Conduct American Quarter Horse specific research on toe grabs
 - Conduct further American Quarter Horse specific research on track surfaces regarding type of surface vs. type of injuries
 - Develop a certification program for starters, assistant starters, jockeys, grooms, security personnel and other necessary designees as deemed necessary
 - Support implementing an equine injury database at all racetracks for all breeds
 - Endorse out-of-competition testing and support the continued testing for anabolic steroids at sale companies as a condition of consignment
 - Endorse mandatory testing of claimed horses for anabolic steroids
 - Endorse and consolidate testing at accredited laboratories

ACTION PLAN FOR BREEDING/GENETIC DEFECTS:

1. Have a breeders' summit and videotape to develop an educational DVD and/or power point presentation that could be used at Affiliate Workshop, World Show, All-American Quarter Horse Congress, alliance partner conventions and other locations by AQHA members.
2. A "Welfare Link" for "America's Horse" weekly newsletter and the AQHA Web site has been created. It includes an animal welfare statement and links to welfare information in the AQHA rulebook and will also provide access to welfare articles covering different topics involving racing, showing, breeding, etc. as they become available.
3. Conduct breeders' seminar during AQHA Annual Convention
4. Expand current breeder referral program by establishing a "premium level" for those breeders who agree to test for genetic and infectious diseases (where applicable).

ACTION PLAN FOR SHOWS:

1. Change Professional Horsemen's application for both race and show professionals to add a section to include an agreement to monitor humane treatment. Change the current policy for Professional Horsemen to have two members (increased from one) to discuss unacceptable training or inhumane treatment with offenders on site.
2. Judges must report disqualifications for inhumane treatment in show arena and list reason for disqualification on judge's card returned to AQHA.
3. Track horse injuries that occur at AQHA-approved shows, and create a form for a veterinary statement detailing injury.

AQHA news and information is a service of AQHA publications. For more information on *The American Quarter Horse Journal*, *The American Quarter Horse Racing Journal* or *America's Horse*, visit www.aqha.com/magazines.

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