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## Unwanted Horse Coalition Takes the Next Step

by Tom LaMarra

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The Unwanted Horse Coalition, now in its fifth year, adopted a multi-faceted strategic plan June 21 designed to continue advocacy and education programs but move the organization to the next level.

Coalition members met in Washington, D.C., as part of the American Horse Council National Issues Forum. The UHC, which falls under the AHC umbrella, devised the strategic plan during a meeting in May.

The strategic plan calls for continued development and distribution of educational materials; expanded involvement with current and potential member organizations; collaboration with the horse industry on developing solutions in areas such as euthanasia; and developing resources for equine care facilities.

The plan was developed in part in response to a 2009 survey of about 27,000 horse owners and industry stakeholders in the United States.

"We've done an outstanding job raising awareness (of the unwanted horse issue), but the survey shows people feel we need to become more involved at the working level rather than just educate and inform," said Dr. Tom Lenz, who has served as UHC chairman for the past five years.

The UHC plans to work closely with state horse councils and other organizations that already may be doing things in the area of providing haybanks and feedbanks for horses, euthanasia and castration clinics, and wellness programs. It also is considering webinars to provide more access to information and programs.

The UHC also agreed to study formation of a site-based model that would incorporate funding mechanisms for future programs. Because of legal and financial questions, the coalition formed a subcommittee to study the issue and report back. So for the time being, the UHC will increase its efforts as a clearinghouse for information.

"The people putting on (clinics) should fund them at the outset," AHC president Jay Hickey said. "You're talking about a lot of money. Maybe we should walk before we run. We'd be inundated with requests."

UHC members agreed, however, taking the next step could provide benefits not just for horses, but in how the organization is perceived.

"It would show we're really committed, not just involved," Lenz said.

Coalition members noted the UHC is viewed by some as being "pro-slaughter" even though when it was formed, "the idea was to take politics off the table," Lenz said. "It still bothers me that after all these years we have members who perceive us to be pro-slaughter."

Hickey said that tag is "endemic to this issue. It's classic you're either for me or against me."

The UHC, which was formed to educate the public about the problem of what is believed to be hundreds of thousands of unwanted horses—exact figures aren't known—in the U.S., now has 33 member organizations. During the meeting, Dr. Douglas Corey, who previously served as vice chairman, was elected chairman.

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