

# Horse Protection Act Update

Ward Stutz

AQHA Director of Breed Integrity



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# Great News!!!

## Horse Protection Act new rules postponed until February 1, 2026



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# AQHA Efforts on Horse Protection Act

- **Communication with President's Trump's USDA transition team**
- **Communicated with Members of Congress**
- **Communication with state Ag Commissioners**
- **Lobbying Partners**
  - **American Horse Council**
    - **HPA Working Group**
  - **National Cattlemen's Beef Association**
  - **HPA Lobbying Alliance**
    - **Vogel Group in Washington, DC**



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# Very Short Civics Lesson

- **Legislation:** Congress passes the laws
  - Horse Protection Act
- **Regulations:** To carry out the implementation of the law, Congress authorizes agencies jurisdiction to develop regulations and rules
- **Policies:** Policies consist of technical notes, written directives, and other official language used to guide staff in enforcement of rules/regulations



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# Horse Protection Act Timeline

- 1970 Congress Passed the Horse Protection Act
  - Included all horses
  - To prevent the soring of horses
  - Defined soring
  - Unlawful to show, exhibit or transport a sored horse
  - Established penalties
- Congress authorized USDA/APHIS to carry out the provisions of the Act
  - The Secretary is authorized to issue such rules and regulations as they deem necessary to carry out the provisions of the Act



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# Horse Protection Act Timeline

- 1976 the Horse Protection Act was amended
  - Established Horse Industry Organizations (HIO)
  - Implemented Designated Qualified Persons (DQP)
- Proposed Rule in 2017 was rescinded by President Trump's regulatory freeze
- May 8, 2024, New Rules were published in the Federal Register
- Texas Court Ruling – USDA exceeded their statutory authority
- 2024 New Rule was postponed by President Trump's regulatory freeze
- 2024 New Rule has been postponed to February 1, 2026



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# Definition of Soring

(A) an irritating or blistering agent has been applied, internally or externally, by a person to any limb of a horse,

(B) any burn, cut, or laceration has been inflicted by a person on any limb of a horse,



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# Definition of Soring

(C) any tack, nail, screw, or chemical agent has been injected by a person into or used by a person on any limb of a horse, or



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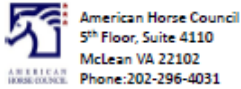
# Definition of Soring

(D) any other substance or device has been used by a person on any limb of a horse, or a person has engaged in a practice involving a horse, and, as a result of such application, infliction, injection, use, or practice, such horse suffers, or can reasonably be expected to suffer, physical pain or distress, inflammation, or lameness when walking, trotting, or otherwise moving, except that such term does not include such an application, infliction, injection, use, or practice in connection with the therapeutic treatment of a horse by or under the supervision of a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State in which such treatment was given.



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# Where Are We Today



February 27, 2025

Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary of Agriculture  
USDA  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dr. Michael Watson  
Administrator  
USDA-APHIS  
4700 River Road  
Riverdale, MD 20737

Dr. Sarah Helming  
Deputy Administrator  
USDA-Animal Care  
4700 River Road  
Riverdale, MD 20737

Dear Secretary Rollins, Dr. Watson, and Dr. Helming,

The American Horse Council (AHC) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) take the following actions regarding the Horse Protection Act (HPA) Amendments (FR Docket No. APHIS-2022-0004) in support of a fair, open, and comprehensive rule-making process.

- **Reopen a minimum 60-day comment period** for the Horse Protection Act (HPA) Amendments (FR Docket No. APHIS-2022-0004) as per Executive Order: Regulatory Freeze Pending Review: item #3.
- **Convene a listening session for stakeholders** prior to the drafting and publication of any amendments or new proposed rule.
- **Delay the implementation** of any final or amended rule by **180 days** after publication.

*If these requirements cannot be met, the American Horse Council demands the complete rescission of Horse Protection Act (HPA) Amendments (FR Docket No. APHIS-2022-0004).*

The AHC represents all aspects of the horse industry. The overwhelming majority of breeds and disciplines do not engage in the illegal and inhumane practice of soring. The amendments in their current form are a duplication of efforts as most equestrian disciplines self-regulate through strict rules, fines, and disqualifications to uphold the highest standards of horse care and welfare both during and outside of competition.

In its current format, the HPA updated rule impacts an estimated 50,000 equine events across the country annually. However, less than 1% of all events are at risk of having sored horses compete (per USDA Animal Care research). Moving forward with the amendments as they stand will cause irreparable harm to the entire industry.

**The horse industry universally supports ending the practice of intentional soring and improving equine welfare.**

The proposed rule fundamentally alters and extensively broadens the enforcement of preventing the intentional injury of a horse's limb and hooves to produce an exaggerated gait. Unfortunately,

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- **Delay the implementation** of any final or amended rule by **180 days** after publication.
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# Where We Are Today

## [Federal Register :: Public Inspection: Horse Protection; Postponement of Regulations](https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2025-04-03/horse-protection-postponement-of-regulations)



The screenshot shows the Federal Register website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Sections, Browse, Search, Reader Aids, and My FR. Below this is the Federal Register logo and the tagline "Public Inspection :: Tomorrow's Documents Today". A red banner indicates "Public Inspection :: Rule". The main heading is "Horse Protection; Postponement of Regulations". Below this, it states "An unpublished Rule by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on 03/21/2025". A sidebar on the left contains "Document Details" and "Sharing" options. The main content area has a pink background with a hand icon and text stating "This document is unpublished. It is scheduled to be published on 03/21/2025." It also mentions that once published, it will be available in an official form and provides a link to "download the unpublished PDF version." A "Site Feedback" button is located at the bottom right of the content area.

https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2025-04-03/horse-protection-postponement-of-regulations

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### Horse Protection; Postponement of Regulations

An **unpublished** Rule by the [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#) on 03/21/2025

**PUBLIC INSPECTION DOCUMENT**

 This document is **unpublished**. It is scheduled to be published on 03/21/2025.

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# Where We Are Today

Recent USDA/APHIS memo to stakeholders:

- There will be no regulatory changes between last show season and the upcoming show season. New rules will not apply beginning April 2, 2025
  - Reporting requirements
  - Hiring a Horse Protection Inspectors



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# Where We Are Today

Does this mean that breed and discipline shows (outside of the gaited horses) will not be subject to inspection?

The 2024 rule did not change which events are covered by the Horse Protection Act, so all covered events may be inspected. However, USDA prioritizes its inspection resources based on a variety of factors including size of the show and likelihood of HPA noncompliance.



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# Where We Are Today

Use of fly spray, show sheen, and other similar substances:

These substances are specific to TWH and racking horses. It is still acceptable for other breeds to use these products on the extremities.



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# Where We Are Today

- 60 Day Comment Period
  - Started on March 21, 2025
  - Look for guidance from AQHA on how to comment
  - Look for guidance from AQHA on our position and sample comments

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Enter APHIS-2022-0004 in the Search field. Select the Documents tab, then select the Comment button in the list of documents.

Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS-20220004, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 2C-10.16, [4700 River Road Unit 25, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238](#).



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