

Dear Members of the USDA:

My name is Jackie Hale. My husband, James, and I own an American Saddlebred training stable in Columbiana, AL. While I am a strong supporter of equine welfare, I am opposed to the proposed changes to the Horse Protection Act primarily because of the addition of the words "and related breeds" in the sections currently pertaining to Tennessee Walking Horses and Racking Horses. I believe the scope of the rule is far too broad and would negatively affect segments of the equine industry that have no history of sorring.

James and I are active, professional members of the American Saddlebred community. James is a United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) licensed judge in the American Saddlebred, Hackney, Roadster and Saddle Seat Equitation divisions. He has served the United Professional Horseman's Association (UPHA) as Chapter Chairman or Co-Chairman for 10 years. I have just completed a 3-year term on the American Saddlebred Horse Association national Board of Directors and still serve on several committees.

American Saddlebreds, along with Hackneys, Morgans, and Arabians, are all "TROTting BREEDS". While a small percentage of Saddlebreds are exhibited in our "Five Gaited" division, they ALL TROT in every class that they are shown in. An unsound horse cannot trot squarely, so intentionally sorring them would be completely counterproductive. All these breeds are also USEF Affiliates and we are very well regulated at USEF recognized competitions.

If this proposed rule is passed as written, and all pads are banned, a large percentage of our show horse population will be unable to perform the job for which they are intended. American Saddlebreds, as well as these other trotting breeds, use pads to balance their stride, protect their hooves, support their legs, correct low heels, or otherwise aid a horse that needs the support and cushion that a pad provides.

I'm sure there are many people much smarter than I am, working within the walls of this very building, who can figure out the economic impact that this rule would have. If you think about the tens of thousands of people directly affected – not to mention the trickle down effect to everyone from the corn growers to the drug companies - the negative economic impact of those three little words "and related breeds" is hard to even comprehend.

James and I also put on 2 horse shows a year in Murfreesboro, TN. In the nearly 5 years that we've offered these shows, 4 new American Saddlebred training stables have opened up in that area. I know that having two, nice "hometown" shows a year has contributed to the re-growth of the Saddlebred industry in Middle Tennessee, and I hope we can continue to support that growth.

Finally, I'd ask you to consider that there are many people raising and training horses who simply won't have any use for them if they cannot fulfill their role as a show horse. James and I feel fortunate that we are able to provide retirement for a couple of special horses that have served us well, but we could not possibly provide a home for a whole herd of "yard art". The rule as currently written would have not only a devastating economic impact, but a significant welfare impact, which in my view, undermines the intent of the HPA. The fact is there will be thousands of unwanted horses that could end up on trucks to slaughter houses in Mexico if pads are banned. So if you don't care about the negative economic impact of this rule, surely you care about the welfare of the horses that would be collateral damage if pads are banned.

Thank you again for your time, attention and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Hale