

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To summarize my research on the soring problem, I could say that overall the USDA is doing very poor science and medicine in the enforcement of the HPA. This comes thru in the scar clinic transcripts and in court testimony. The agency is acting more like policemen than scientists. Their inspection methods are entirely subjective and the inspectors are highly biased to think everything abnormal equals evidence of scar tissue or inflammation and that must mean soring without every considering any other possible explanation. There is little imagination on display. They all agree the lesions are different from the classic one seen before the passage of the HPA. They do not see those classic lesions on the front of the pastern. They have shifted their attention around to the back of the pastern and are looking at something very different. People did not sore their horses on the rear of the pastern. Despite this nobody in USDA ever questioned this change nor did they verify these are not soring lesion but rather accepted that these changes must be soring injuries. Nobody sought to biopsy them and look at them histopathologically. They use the same inspection protocol they used when you could make the diagnosis from the grandstands. It is inaccurate, insensitive and they are highly biased that it all = soring. No wonder there is so much confusion among them and inconsistency and error. No one is thinking about how many really sored horses they may be missing. They are looking in the wrong place on the horse with the wrong technique with improperly trained people. The VMO's are tasked with training the DQP but they do not understand what they are looking at themselves and who is training the VMO's? The language of the HPA is inaccurate, poorly worded and confusing to properly trained pathologists much less lay people so USDA does not know what to look for. The VMO's recite the language verbatim when questioned by the DQPs because they cannot in their own words explain what they see. The DQP's do not agree with them and are confused about what the inspection standards are. You can see that in the scar clinic transcripts. The VMO's use incorrect logic in their conclusions. They disagree among themselves about the Dx. Look at the data showing a high % of the time they cannot agree on the diagnosis. They are bullying the DQP's who question them. There are no facts to support their conclusion. There is no independent verification of their findings and there is no due process for disqualified clients.

Although there is performance monitoring of the DQPs, nobody is monitoring the VMO's. How do they know when they are wrong? They assume they are always right. Indeed two of them claim they are never wrong which flies in the face of common sense. Who is training the VMO's? Do they get CE? It appears they are being trained by administrators in the language of the law rather than concentrating on the science and medicine which is supposedly their expertise.

This is poor program management. USDA claims to be concerned for horse welfare yet does not know how common soring really is or how many really sored horses there are. I believe there are still some people who sore horses because I understand human nature. There will always be someone who tries to game the system. But I think it is way less common than USDA thinks. If they really care they must do something different than what they are doing. They need objective testing and it must be done with cooperation from the industry. In the past there were abuses and the industry was guilty of not cleaning this up. But there are responsible people who want to stop this and save the industry and USDA should partner with them. They will be more effective in

discouraging this. USDA will never do this alone because they do not have the manpower to reach everywhere and enforce it.

The changes on the posterior are not scars. They appear to be calluses or homologous with calluses. The folds of skin they are calling out are likely caused by the unique high stepping gait of these horses in conjunction with their confirmation, contracted heels, the package, shoeing and probably the interaction of the skin here with the action device but not human action. Indeed equine practitioners I have spoken with about this tell me some TWH have the same changes on the pasterns of the hind legs which should tell USDA it is not a soring lesion. We have attempted to show by biopsy and histopathology these posterior pastern changes are not soring injuries. USDA will eventually have to accept this and look elsewhere. Why does USDA not claim their program has markedly reduced the incidence of soring, and refocus on finding the acute lesion on the cranial pasterns where soring may still be occurring in some horses? They need to consult knowledgeable people and enlist their help. They need to get the VMO's additional training in pathology and/or dermatology so they can properly instruct the DQPs.

Instead of focusing on law enforcement they should be studying the problem scientifically. The approach should be how much soring is occurring in horses and how is it still being done? I believe the HPA has markedly reduced the prevalence of soring in TWH. But the lesions do not look the way they used to. Why? What's different? Well people who sore horses now try to hide it so we need to change how we detect it. You need multiple approaches not just simple visual inspection and manual palpation. That is a good start but it is not enough by itself. I think they still focus on that because that is all they know. There is no imagination about what else they could do which is why you need some new and different people involved who can think outside of the box about the problem. You need to understand the problem to solve it not just single minded law enforcement. The focus should be on protecting horses but not at the expense of people rights. There is no due process for disqualified horses and people.