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August 22, 2012

Anne MacMillan
Senior Advisor to the Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ms. MacMillan:

Thank you for taking the time yesterday to discuss the AVMA's concerns about the unethical and illegal practice of soring horses, and the importance of strong and unhindered enforcement of the Horse Protection Act by USDA-APHIS personnel. As a former APHIS Veterinary Medical Officer, Deputy Administrator of the APHIS Animal Care program, and APHIS Administrator, I can say with some authority and experience that industry self-policing has proven to be ineffective. It is clearly evident that we need USDA-APHIS personnel on-site to properly enforce the Act and we need senior staff at USDA to fully support them when they do so.

The AVMA and our colleagues at the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) support strong enforcement of the Horse Protection Act at each and every gaited horse event. This year's Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration is no exception, particularly given the long history of numerous and serious violations associated with this major Walking Horse event.

The AVMA and AAEP are strongly committed to ending the practice of soring. After 40 plus years of effort - by us, other like-minded organizations, and the USDA - it's past time for that to happen.

Sincerely,

W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, MBA
CEO and Executive Vice President