



The PAST Act makes the necessary changes to once and for all bring an end to the cruel and inhumane practice of soring. The AVMA, the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), and every state veterinary medical association in the country support the PAST Act.

KEY POINTS:

- Soring is the unethical and illegal practice of deliberately inflicting pain to exaggerate the leg motion of horses to gain an unfair advantage in the show ring. The inhumane practice is condemned by the AVMA and the AAEP as well as a number of animal protection organizations and veterinarians.
- The PAST Act makes the act of soring illegal, which is imperative to stopping the practice, not after the harm has been done.
- The bill will ban the harmful devices used to hide and worsen the effects of soring; end the horse show industry's failed self-policing system; and improve the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ability to oversee inspections and punish violators.
- The PAST Act will not create a new federal law, but rather improve an existing law that has been on the books for more than 40 years and ineffective at ending soring.

What will this bill do?

The PAST Act will amend the Horse Protection Act, passed in 1970, to improve the government's ability to enforce the law and strengthen penalties against those who violate it, hopefully bringing an end to the abusive practice of soring. Specifically the PAST Act aims to:

- end the current self-policing system in the walking horse industry by placing the training, oversight, licensing and assigning of all inspectors into the hands of the USDA;
- prohibit the use of action devices and performance packages, also known as "chains" and "stacks," on any limb of Tennessee Walking Horses, Spotted Saddle Horses and Racking Horses at horse shows, exhibitions or auctions (There is an exemption for pads that are strictly protective or therapeutic.);
- make the actual act of soring illegal (Currently, it is

only illegal to transport, show or auction a horse that has been sored);

- increase the civil and criminal penalties for violation; and
- allow for the permanent disqualification for violators on their third or higher violation.

What is the problem?

The inhumane practice of soring is still used far too often by many owners and trainers to win in the show ring. Soring is so common that many trainers and owners believe they must use it to compete.

Horses are sored in many ways. Caustic materials (e.g., kerosene, mustard oil) may be used to injure the skin of the lower leg; the hoof and/or sole may be ground to expose sensitive tissues; hard objects may be inserted between the shoe pads and the sole; metal hoof bands may be over tightened; and/or improper shoeing techniques may be used. Irrespective of the technique, the purpose of soring is to cause the horse pain so that it lifts its legs faster and higher (known as the "big lick").

While rest and training may allow some horses to recover from this abuse, others may suffer irreversible foot damage or become crippled for life. The mental damage done to the horse can make rehabilitation difficult, if not impossible.

Unfortunately, many factors—including insufficient funding and other resources for enforcement, unethical owners and trainers, show judges that reward bad behavior, and strong political influence by the industry—have contributed to a culture of corruption so that now, more than 40 years after passage of the Horse Protection Act, we are still seeing horses sored.

Why is the AVMA supportive?

- The AVMA condemns the inhumane practice of soring, which causes pain and suffering and walking horses.

- The AVMA and the AAEP have repeatedly called for an end to the use of action devices or performance that hide or mask the symptoms of soring.
- The PAST Act gives the USDA more legal authority to charge and prosecute violators.
- Passing this bill would end the horse show industry's ability to inspect and regulate itself through its designated qualified persons (DQPs) program by establishing a new program whereby independent inspectors would be licensed, trained, and overseen by the USDA.

How often does soring occur?

Recent data proves that soring is still common within the walking horse industry.

- During the 2014 show year, when the USDA was present, regulators found 83 percent (598/719) of horses were in violation of the Horse Protection Act.
- In 2014, 50 percent of horses tested positive for foreign substances (masking agents, counterirritants, numbing agents).
- From 2012 to 2014, 400 horses were tested for drugs, of which 10 percent (40) were found positive for sedatives, NSAIDs, steroids, and/or tranquilizers.
- Roughly one-fifth, or 20.4 percent of participants, at the 2014 National Celebration, the biggest walking horse competition, were found in violation of the Horse Protection Act. That is more than triple the 2013 rate of 6 percent. Approximately 166 horses were disqualified, while 651 of the 1,560 initial entries (42 percent) were either scratched or disqualified.

Resources:

- View AVMA's resources on soring at: avma.org/soring
- View information about the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service's Horse Protection Program at: www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/hp/index.shtml

Status of the bill:

- Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) introduced S. 1121 on April 28, 2015, and it was referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and

Transportation.

- Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.-3) introduced H.R. 3268 on July 28, 2015, and it was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.