

Animal Care Tech Note

The Horse Protection Act: What Horse Show, Exhibition, Sale, and Auction Managers Need to Know

Congress enacted the Horse Protection Act (HPA) to end the cruel and inhumane practice of soring horses. The HPA requires horse event management—any person or entity who organizes, controls, administers or is otherwise responsible for organizing, directing, or administering any horse show, horse exhibition, horse sale, or horse auction—to disqualify sore horses from being shown or exhibited and prohibit their sale or auction. This ensures sore horses do not unfairly compete with horses that are not sore. This tech note summarizes what you as a horse event manager must know to comply with the HPA and its regulations as of February 1, 2025.

Conducting HPA Inspections

Inspections are a critical tool for ensuring horses participating in shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions comply with the HPA and its regulations. Inspections may only be conducted by horse event management, a representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), or an APHIS-authorized Horse Protection Inspector (HPI) to identify HPA violations. If event management delegates inspections to an APHIS representative or HPI, you will not be held liable for any sore horses unless you fail to disqualify a horse after the APHIS representative or HPI notifies you that a horse does not comply with the HPA or its regulations. Event managers should contact HPIs directly to coordinate coverage, including negotiating rates and other expenses.

Event managers are responsible for making sure that no person impedes, intimidates, threatens, or interferes with HPIs or APHIS representatives and that no one influences event attendees to do the same.

Horse event managers may not use someone who is not authorized by APHIS to inspect horses for compliance with the HPA and its regulations.

If you choose not to use an APHIS representative or HPI, you, the event manager, are responsible for identifying all horses that are sore or otherwise in violation of the HPA or its regulations and disqualifying or prohibiting them from participating or competing. You must complete the inspection before the horse is sold or auctioned, or in the case of a



horse show or exhibition, before the horse participates. You must immediately remove from further participation any horse found sore or otherwise in violation of the HPA or its regulations during a show or exhibition. You must also inspect all horses that placed first in each class or event to determine if they are sore or otherwise in violation of the HPA or its regulations.

General Responsibilities

In addition to ensuring horses are inspected for HPA violations, you, the horse event manager, are generally responsible for meeting the following conditions under the HPA and its regulations.

Prohibited Substances and Devices: You are responsible for ensuring that no devices or substances prohibited under §11.6 of the HPA regulations (www.federalregister.gov/d/2024-09469#sectno-reference-11.6) are present in the warm-up area.

Disqualified Participants: You must disallow the participation of anyone who is under a disqualification order (www.aphis.usda.gov/hpa/disqualification-list) from the Secretary of Agriculture from showing or exhibiting any horse, or judging or managing any horse show, horse exhibition, horse sale, or horse auction.

Animal Identification: You must verify the identity of all horses entered in the event using one of the following acceptable methods:

- Sufficient description to identify the horse, including at a minimum the name, age, breed, color, gender,

- distinctive markings, and unique and permanent forms of identification when present (such as brands, tattoos, cowlicks, or blemishes)
- Electronic identification that complies with ISO standards
- Equine passport issued by a State government and accepted by the State government in which the horse show, horse exhibition, or horse sale or auction will occur

Adequate Inspection Space: You are responsible for providing APHIS representatives or HPIs with adequate space and access. This includes:

- Unlimited access to all areas of the horse show, exhibition, sale, or auction for the purpose of inspecting any horses or any records required to be kept by regulation
- An adequate, safe, and accessible area for the visual inspection and observation of horses
- Sufficient space and facilities to carry out their duties, including a well-lit space for inspecting horses that is conveniently located to the event, provides protection from the elements, facilitates crowd control measures, and has an accessible and reliable 110-volt electrical power source
- Sufficient space adjacent to the inspection area for designated horses to wait before and after inspections and an area to be used for detention of horses

Access to Warm-Up and Inspection Areas: You are responsible for controlling access to the warm-up and inspection areas. This includes:

- Ensuring the management representative, HPIs, and APHIS representatives have unrestricted access to the designated areas
- Ensuring only one person with immediate custody of the horse accompanies the horse into the designated inspection area
- Permitting no more than three people, including the person having immediate custody of the horse, the trainer, and the rider, in the designated warm-up area
- Prohibiting all other people from the warm-up or inspection area that do not have prior approval from an APHIS representative or HPI
- Ensuring inspected horses do not leave the designated warm-up area before showing

Recordkeeping and Reporting: You are responsible for complying with all recordkeeping and reporting requirements, including:

- Maintaining required records and keeping them for as long as required
- Allowing the APHIS representative or HPI to examine and make copies of all records pertaining to any horse during business hours or other mutually agreed upon time
- Meeting all event reporting requirements and associated submission deadlines



Scan the QR code for more information on records and reporting requirements for horse show, exhibition, sale, and auction managers.

Additional Responsibilities When Using APHIS Representatives or HPIs

If you choose to use an APHIS representative or HPI to inspect horses for HPA violations, you must ensure the following additional conditions are met under the HPA and its regulations.

- Do not interfere with or influence APHIS representatives or appointed HPIs in carrying out their duties.
- Prevent tampering with any part of a horse's limbs or hooves in such a way that could cause a horse to be sore after inspection.
- Immediately disqualify or prohibit from showing, exhibition, sale, offering for sale, or auction of any horse identified by an APHIS representative or HPI to be sore or otherwise in violation of the HPA or its regulations.
- Appoint at least two HPIs when more than 100 horses are entered in an event.
- Promptly notify the APHIS Administrator in writing when dissatisfied with the performance of an appointed HPI and the reasons why.
- Ensure at least one farrier is physically present if more than 100 horses are entered in the event. If fewer than 100 horses are entered in an event, at least one farrier must be on call and within the local area.
- Ensure farriers appear promptly if requested by an APHIS representative or HPI.

More Information

Scan the QR code to learn more about the HPA and its regulations.

