

Unwanted Horse Summit April 19, 2005 – Washington, DC

Background

The attached list of organizations and officials were invited to attend a one day workshop for the purpose of determining if agreement could be reached regarding addressing the issue of unwanted horses in the United States. Those invited to the Summit were acknowledged to have differing strongly held views about many aspects of the unwanted horse issue. However, it was felt that since all participants have in common a genuine concern for the health and welfare of horses, there would be great value in trying to reach agreement on specific, constructive, achievable and doable action steps that could be implemented toward a cooperative effort to begin addressing the issue of unwanted horses.

The Summit was preceded with a standing room only two-hour educational session on the plight of the unwanted horse that was open to all American Horse Council meeting attendees. The invitation-only Summit was then convened as an intensive 6.5-hour workshop designed and conducted by a professional facilitator from outside the industry.

Purpose of the Summit

The Summit was organized to bring key stakeholders together to start a dialogue on the plight of the unwanted horse in North America for the purpose of developing consensus on the most effective way to work together to improve the quality of life for tens of thousands of unwanted horses and to reduce their number. Because the Summit was designed as a working session, the size of the group was limited to approximately 30 people. The Summit invitation list was drawn up with every effort to assure representation of a broad range of views, sometimes opposing views, among breed groups, sport and discipline organizations, rescue and retirement facilities, veterinary associations and welfare groups. A list of the attendees is noted at the end of this report.

Design of the Workshop

The professional facilitator was given complete freedom to design a workshop and discussion process that he felt would most likely achieve the purposes of the Summit. Toward this end, the facilitator asked all confirmed Summit attendees to send a confidential communication to him indicating what they see as the key issues that need to be discussed. This information was then used in designing a constructive discussion process for the Summit. Responses were received from 17 organizations, and a Summary of the Responses and a Consolidation of all responses, edited only to provide anonymity for the individuals responding, was distributed to all confirmed attendees prior to the Summit. These steps are being reported to demonstrate clearly the independence of the professional facilitator and the openness of the process.

Workshop Discussion and Agreements

Lengthy discussion was held to determine all the causes of unwanted horses and all the approaches to dealing with them. Workshop participants then examined the key issues that need to be addressed and the role of “key players” in addressing both of these topics. See the appendix for a brief outline of what was identified in these discussions.

There was agreement that dealing with the issue of unwanted horses requires a long-term, well-funded collaborative effort that would include many people and organizations who did not participate in this Summit. In order to continue the constructive discussions and positive momentum resulting from the Summit discussions, workshop participants were challenged to identify at least five constructive, achievable and doable action steps that should be taken as immediate follow-up to the Summit to facilitate a cooperative approach to dealing with the unwanted horse issue. Complete consensus was reached regarding the following action steps:

1. Develop an organizational structure for both facilitating and actually doing the work outlined in a collaborative manner
 - A. Form a National Steering Committee / Consortium – give it a name
 - B. Form Working Groups to begin work in each of the identified areas
 - Education
 - Funding
 - Public Relations
 - Legal / Legislative
 - Corporate Opportunities
 - Rescue / Retirement (standards)
 - Strategic Planning
 - C. Create a listserv of people and organizations interested in participating in this collaborative work
2. Develop a Mission Statement
3. Develop a message strategy
4. Develop a communication / marketing strategy
5. Develop an education strategy (short and long term)
6. Develop a funding strategy
7. Identify existing educational materials and resources that can be used by the various Working Groups

Commitment to Continue

1. The workshop concluded with an enthusiastic commitment by all participants to continue to work collaboratively in the manner described above. It is understood, however, that many of the people at the Summit must carry these recommendations back to their organization's governing boards before formal organizational commitments can be made.
2. AAEP agreed to continue to administratively facilitate a collaborative effort in the manner described until a more formal organizational structure is in place and able to function effectively.
3. AAEP agreed to host a follow-up workshop at their annual meeting at the end of this year, in December in Seattle, to determine what progress has been made and to perhaps develop a strategic plan for the longer-term success of this important work.

Summit Participants

Dr. Rick Arthur, Oak Tree Racing Association
Jim Barton and Jerry Windham, American Quarter Horse Association
Remi Bellocq, National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association
Judith Bokman, Standardbred Retirement Foundation
Valerie Cole, State Horse Council Advisory Committee
Dr. Jim Cook, American Veterinary Medical Association
Dr. Tim Cordes, U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Dr. Doug Corey, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association
Bob Curran, The Jockey Club
Dr. Lydia Gray, Hooved Animal Humane Society
Pennell Hopkins, Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Jim Kelley, American Paint Horse Association
Dr. Andrew Lang, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Dr. Tom Lenz, American Association of Equine Practitioners
Robin Lohnes, American Horse Protection Association
Norm Luba, North American Equine Ranching Information Council
Dan Manzanares, New Mexico Livestock Board
Mike Miller, Carriage Operators of North America
Herb Moelis, Thoroughbred Charities of America
Pat Mullins, North American Riding for the Handicapped Association
Al Patterson, Equine Canada
Josh Pons, Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association
Kathleen Schwartz, Days End Farm Horse Rescue, Inc.
Jim Tedford, Humane Society of the United States
Lori Rawls, United States Equestrian Federation
Jeff Rawson, Bureau of Land Management
Russell Williams, United States Trotting Association
Congressman Ed Whitfield (KY – 1st District)

Contact for further information

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Notes from general and breakout group discussions

APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH UNWANTED HORSES

1. Rescue (abused horses) / Retirement (permanent placement)

Key Issues

Funding

Licensure

Oversight

Key Players

DVMs

Fund raisers

Government oversight authority

2. Euthanasia / Carcass disposal

Key Issues

Disposal options

Owner responsibility

Who?/ Where?

More affordable and available

Key Players

DVM Owner

Disposal facilities

Government – Local/City/State

AAEP / others

3. Slaughter (Processing)

Key Issues

Necessary? “Disabled horse”

Short term/long term objectives

Make obsolete

Remove reward for neglect

Action: Stricter enforcement of transportation regulations

Key Players

Government

Plants

Auctions

Owners

AHC / others

4. Education/Communications – Ownership Responsibilities

Key Issues

Owner responsibility (breeding) – responsible breeding

How to reach new owners

How to reach uneducated owners

Early education (children)

Who takes the lead (infrastructure)?

Best practices

Education

More owners

Sale, auction, transfer disclosures

Key Players

Breed Associations / Disciplines

Industry suppliers

Feed / track / horse shows / races

Vet. Associations / 4-H / FFA / Pony Clubs

State Horse Councils

Owner organizations

APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH UNWANTED HORSES (continued)

5. Second Career (rehabilitation, adoption)

Key Issues

Infrastructure to direct toward 2nd career

Communication/education of owners that horse can do other things (internet)

Educate owners and veterinarians (AAEP)

Key Players

Disciplines/Assoc.

Horse Councils and Organizations

6. Industry responsibility, commitment and organization

Key issues

Communication

Abuse reporting

Legal enforcement of rules and regulations

Key players

AHC – Fed

State horse councils

CAUSES OF UNWANTED HORSES

1. Cost of ownership

Key issues

Health & maintenance costs – true cost of maintenance

Stabling

Non-anticipated costs

Participation costs

Education

Overzealous dealers

2. No-fault / inevitabilities

Age

Disease

Liability (dangerous)

Lameness, injury

Economy / tax structure

3. Lack of educated Owners

Key Issues

Expense

Time demands

Medical needs

Capabilities

Expectations

Husbandry

Unrealistic expectations

Improper training

“Ponderosa effect” – people with acreage want to have horses

Change in interests – owner

Lack of owner commitment / responsibility / planning

4. Overbreeding and lack of responsible breeding

Key Issues

Expectations

Objectives

Lure of financial incentives

Inexperience

CAUSES OF UNWANTED HORSES (continued)

5. Market value (real or perceived) of horse

Key Issues

Secondary markets
Salvage market

6. Physical/behavioral disability and disease

Key issues

Correctable – rehabilitation
Non-corrective

7. Wild Horses

A separate issue

Key Issues generally applicable to all of the above

Need better data

No-fault

Education; owners need lifetime plan; of veterinarians (primary advisors)

Euthanasia & disposal

Slaughter

Education

Mechanism – making it happen

Funding

Cost

Education before the fact

Key Players in dealing with causes of unwanted horses

Veterinarians, Breed and interest

Organizations, Rescue/rehabilitation / Animal welfare, government agencies (USDA), Animal Control,

Trainers, Horse Owners, Funders

Role of Key players

Communication

Education

Cooperation

Coordination

Funding

Enforcement

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