



Soring DATA SHEET



“That just looks wrong.”

— 10-YEAR-OLD BOY WHILE WATCHING VIDEO OF A “BIG LICK” HORSE SHOWN IN STACKS AND CHAINS, JUNE 10, 2011.

WHY IS THIS ABUSE DONE?

Soring is practiced to get gaited horses to artificially enhance their step to win in shows. A winning image is rewarded with ribbons, cash, recognition, future breedings and training fees.

ENFORCEMENT TO END SORING

There is a federal law called the Horse Protection Act, which prohibits soring at shows and sales, enforced by the USDA. However, most inspections are self-regulated by HIOs (horse industry organizations licensed by the USDA.)



WHAT IS SORING?

- Soring is deliberately inducing pain to exaggerate a gaited horse’s movement for the show ring. A variety of devious and cruel methods have been devised over the years. Soring violations also include many methods used to avoid detection. Soring is against Federal law and is subject to fines and penalties if detected at a public show or sale.

- Soring includes the abuse of chains, foreign substances and chemicals, illegal shoeing to change the natural hoof angles, length of toe, weighted shoes, pressure shoeing, as well as the insertion of blocks and other devices between the hoof and the shoe stack to place pressure on the frog and sole of the foot to create pain in the front end of the horse. These methods all cause the horse to attempt to avoid the pain by picking up his front feet faster and higher, and shifting his weight back onto his hocks. Slang for an obviously sore-going horse is “going too deep.”

“The topical samples from Tennessee Walking Horses had the highest incidences of positives (of illegal substances from gas chromatography samplings) that I’ve ever seen in my life.”

— DR. TOMAS TOBIN, LEADING VETERINARIAN IN DRUG CONTROL AND TOXICOLOGY IN COMPETITION HORSES, NOVEMBER 5, 2010
www.thomastobin.com

Soring violations ... bilateral sore ... unilateral sore ... scar rule ... foreign substance ... illegal shoeing ... falsifying records ... pressure shoeing ...



Pressure Soring

Pressure soring causes pain in a horse's front feet, so when each front hoof hits the ground, the horse will "snatch" the foot off the ground, resulting in an unnatural, high, dramatic step.

HOW IT'S DONE

- Grinding the hoof sole down so thin "beads of blood show" and the sole gets spongy and super-sensitive.
- Taking the hoof wall down slightly shorter than the sole, so it provides no supporting protection, called "rolling the sole."
- Inserting hard objects between the shoe or pad and the tender sole, such as bolts (removable for inspections), half a golf ball, hardened epoxy, or a dried piece of hoof.
- "Blocking," which is standing the horse for hours on wedges duct-taped to the hoof.
- Purposely foundering a young horse (called "the natural fix" and "nature's way of soring").
- "Road foundering" the horse by riding fast on a hard surface such as a paved road.
- Extreme tightening of metal hoof bands to cause pain from excessive pressure on the hoof.

HOW TO DETECT

Observations:

- Horse lies down in stall and groans in pain.
- Horse is crampy and unwilling to move.
- Horse warms up into motion with a "praying mantis stance," with abnormal weight thrown on his hind quarters to avoid front end pain.
- Horse stands in classic "standing in a bucket" pose to alleviate pain in front legs (photo above).
- Response to hoof testers (ideal if shoes are pulled first).
- Digital radiography (x-ray will show extreme thinness of sole, any foreign objects, or excessive coffin bone rotation).
- Thermography to detect hot spots from pain.



Horse in pain at a May, 2010 horse show.

Methods Used to Avoid Detection at Inspection

- **numbing agents** that wear off between inspection and show time (such as injected anesthetic, "the shot," or surface application of Lidocaine).
- **"stewarding":** teaching the horse at practice inspections that flinching or reacting will cause worse pain, such as a beating or using a "hot stick" or electric prod.
- **distraction devices:** a nerve gum cord, bit burr under the saddle, hand twitch, alligator clips on sensitive genital tissue, or surgical staples under the mane, applied just before an inspection to cause distracting pain elsewhere during the inspection.
- **horse switching:** providing a substitute horse for inspection under false paperwork, and then switching and putting the sored horse into the show ring.

*fixing ... pressure soring ... "putting the fever in the foot" ...
 pressure shoeing ... "pinching the toes" ... bolting ... blocking ... "under pressure" ...
 "in a bind" ... quicked ... hot nailed ... "tightened up" (for bands) ... cranking ...
 "fixing below the pastern" ... going too deep ... concussion foundering ...
 "peak point" describes the maximum pain point in the weekly soring process ...*



Artwork by Victoria von Kap-herr www.vonkapherr.com

Chemical Soring

Chemical soring is the application of painful, caustic liquids to tenderize the horse's pastern area (ankle), so the repeated strike of a chain is painful and causes the horse to snatch his foot higher with each step. The chain, a crucial part of this show horse style, is termed an "action device," and the exaggerated gaits cannot be created without this chain.

HOW IT'S DONE

Chemicals are applied to the horse's lower legs, then the leg is wrapped in plastic for days. This causes the chemicals to "cook" into the flesh. This creates highly sensitized front pasterns that are painful when the chain strikes with every step. Examples of soring chemicals used:

- kerosene
- diesel
- croton oil
- GoJo hand cleaner
- WD40 oil
- mustard oil

With the increased scrutiny of soring-related scars, another cruel practice is used to remove the telltale scarring. The horse's legs are covered in a chemical stripping agent, which burns off old scar tissue through a very painful process.

"Without the chains, there would be no need for a scar rule."

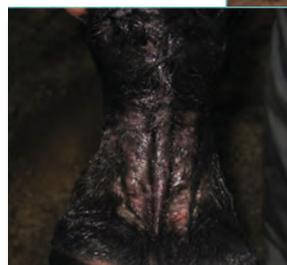
– HUMANE ACTIVIST, MAY, 2011.

HOW TO DETECT

- Palpation
- Gas chromatography or "sniffer"
- Thermography
- Blood or saliva tests
- Drug-detection trained dog
- Visual inspections for:
 - scarring and inflammation, signs of soring insults.
 - wavy, rippled, curly hair on the front legs, an indicator of repeated chemical soring with leg wraps.
 - cording, a type of scarring caused by the plastic wrap sliding down and tightly bunching around the pasterns.
 - checking for application of foreign substances, by walking the barns and trailers at a show.



USDA scar rule violation photos, 2009



*Fixing ... Touching ... "putting them in a bucket" ... Soap 'em ...
Fly spray (a term owners use so they can avoid admitting knowing that an illegal
substance has been used on their horse) ... getting them right ... brushing them ...
square 'em up ... head shake in a bottle ... dropping them ...
Mojo (commonly used by people referring to GoJo hand cleaner) ...*



2-year-old in training with cruel mechanisms



Spotted Saddle horse hoof sheared off by band at show



The "big lick" package



2-year-old in training at renown stable

What Can Be Done to End Soring?

WHAT WOULD HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON ELIMINATING SORING?

- ✓ More money allocated to the USDA's enforcement. At present, USDA's inspectors attend only 7% of the shows, due to budget constraints. Relying on "self-policing" with industry inspectors has not been effective over the past decades.
- ✓ Severe penalties for those guilty of soring. Substantial fines and mandatory, serious suspension periods for trainers and owners, including lifetime bans and prison time, would deter soring.
- ✓ Federal ban on "pads and action devices," commonly termed "stacks and chains."

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP END SORING?

Learn More

- www.StopSoring.com for latest news and facts on soring
- www.SoundHorseConference.com for presentation lectures on soring
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Horse Protection www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/hp
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/tenn_walking_horses

Get Involved

- Run for a Board of Directors' position with the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders & Exhibitors Association (TWHBEA) and effect change from within.
- Propose changes to the TWHBEA bylaws that preclude anyone from holding leadership

positions who has had soring violations within recent years.

- Join FOSH or the HSUS.
- Volunteer for FOSH projects to end soring.

Voice Your Concerns

- Tell your Congressmen that you demand full enforcement of the law and adequate HPA funding.
- Inform traditional show venues and their sponsors that you will not support them because these shows encourage soring.
- Demand that the USDA and the industry inspectors enforce the law effectively.

Report Soring to the USDA, HSUS, and FOSH:

- Document soring incidences observed at barns or shows with photos or video and submit personally or anonymously.
- Report barns and trainers engaging in soring practices.
- Report scheduled "outlaw shows" organized without licensed HIO inspections.

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"Call it what it is. This is torture."

— INTERNATIONALLY-RENOWN CLINICIAN, FEBRUARY, 2011

... stinging ... rolling the toe ... bubble gum (use of commercial sole support product to cause sole pressure) ... putting a button in ... screwing it down ... jack bolts ... pressure plates ... screws ... bolts ... cranking ... heel spring helper (heel spring with a foreign object used to cause pressure at the apex of the frog)