

# It's Time to End Soring—Take Action Now on H.R. 6388, the Amendments to the HPA

December 3, 2012 | [Dr. Gail Golab](#) | [63 Replies](#)

On November 20th the AVMA and AAEP released a [statement](#) indicating our support of HR 6388, the Amendments to the Horse Protection Act (HPA). Expressions of support for the AVMA and AAEP decision from veterinarians and other stakeholders came in enthusiastically and quickly. And, on November 27 and 28, responses from the Walking Horse industry began to trickle in. One of those came from the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association ([TWHBEA](#)), the other via a letter to the presidents of the AVMA and AAEP from the Tennessee Walking Show Horse Organization (TWSHO). Not surprisingly, they were not supportive and their comments were as expected: “Only a few bad actors,” “Incidence of soring is less than 1%,” and “Chains and pads aren't bad, it's the people who abuse them.”

With respect to “a few bad actors,” we'd have an easier time believing that if we didn't have evidence of a culture of abuse that has existed for more than four decades. When you have [37 of the 52 horses](#) at the 2011 National Celebration testing positive for one or more anesthetic agents; convictions of trainers like [Barney Davis](#) and [Jackie McConnell](#) (now with a lifetime disqualification); a [9% HPA violation rate](#) at the 2012 National Celebration (virtually no change from the 9.5% rate at the 2011 event); and violation detection rates that are consistently 5 to 10 times higher when USDA is present at shows to inspect, compared with shows where the industry self-polices; it becomes apparent that this is not “a few bad actors,” it's a real industry problem.



As regards chains and pads, the **industry says “there’s no science to suggest that chains and pads cause problems.”** What the science says is that raising the heels (placing a horse on pads and wedges) 8 degrees can cause the horse to stumble and tire easily. Additionally, **horses placed on pads and wedges showed inflammation in the flexor tendon area of the pastern. Chains that weigh 6 ounces will start to cause hair loss without the use of chemical irritants.** Chains heavier than 6 ounces used on horses that have been previously sore will cause open lesions within two weeks. We’re happy to say we did our homework and, yes, the science that’s available appears to support our position. However, the industry has (once again) missed the point of the AVMA’s and AAEP’s decision. The AVMA’s and AAEP’s primary concern is that chains and pads are used to exacerbate and/or hide soring. **And they can do so irrespective of their size and/or weight.** And, if you had any question about whether we’re really talking about 6-ounce chains and small “packages” (as suggested by the industry) our photos that were provided by an AAEP member should resolve them. To remove opportunity and incentive to sore, and to facilitate the inspection process under the HPA, the AVMA and AAEP agree with the authors of **HR 6388** that self-policing, and chains and pads, have to go.

We mentioned that AVMA member and numerous stakeholder responses to the AVMA's and AAEP's action suggest great support for our decision. We urge you to take those expressions of support one step further by helping us shut down this culture of abuse. Contact your member of Congress and urge them to support HR 6388. Do it today—we'll make it easy for you. Visit our website and **Take Action!**