

# The Atlanta Protocol

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Cosigners

DATE: August 7, 1991

SUBJECT: Recommended Protocol for DQP Examinations

The following document represents the consensus of the cosigners as drafted from discussion notes made at the meeting at the Marriott Airport Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia on July 24, 1991.

### DQP EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The following are the procedures that DQP's shall be required to follow in conducting inspections at horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions.

1. It shall be a requirement that the overall horse be evaluated and that there shall not be reliance on any one factor to the exclusion of all others. The examination should concentrate on detection of heat, pain, swelling, redness and loss of motion. The examination must provide the opportunity to evaluate the horse's freedom of movement in locomotion.
2. The majority of the findings on physical examination should agree. Borderline judgment calls on palpation must be confirmed by evidence of abnormal gait on movement and vice versa.
3. The Horse Protection Act provides, among other things, that a horse shall be considered "sore" if such horse "suffers or can reasonably be expected to suffer physical pain or distress, inflammation, or lameness when walking, trotting, or otherwise moving. . . "

#### **I. Movement on Locomotion**

A). The DQP shall direct the custodian of the horse to lead the horse for a reasonable distance, turning the horse on a short radius, and returning to the DQP. An important factor for a DQP's determination of soreness is the horse's freedom of movement (*i.e.*, does the horse start off, lead, turn, and/or ride freely?). In this visual examination, the DQP needs to evaluate:

1. How the horse starts: Is he reluctant to start moving or does he begin freely and naturally?
2. How the horse turns: Does he turn freely in both directions?
3. How the horse leads: Does he lead and walk freely with a normal gait?
4. How the horse parks himself voluntarily when he stops: Does the horse park himself on a normal four-cornered stance or with a disproportionate amount of weight-bearing on the hind legs?

B). The DQP needs to consider the following:

1. The horse should exhibit an evenness of stride as opposed to stumbling, hopping, limping, or other signs of lameness.
2. The horse should exhibit a normal gait as recognized to be typical of a horse with built-up pads;
3. The horse should exhibit freedom of movement as opposed to reluctance to bear weight on his front limbs when standing, turning, or otherwise moving.

## **II. Digital Palpation**

A). The digital palpation must be made in accordance with 9CFR11.21 and any other appropriate regulations.

B). It must be recognized that reaction to palpation is **not** necessarily synonymous with soreness or pain. It should be further noted that digital palpation, in and of itself, is not a reliable diagnosis of soreing. The DQP should recognize that horses have different tolerances for pain, and that reactions to palpation will vary in individual horses. This reaction may be in response to a reflex or learned behavior as well as pain.

C). Factors which shall be utilized in the palpation process:

1. It is important that any inspection or digital palpation be done within the comfort range of the individual animal, not extending or flexing the animal's limb beyond normal limits and picking up the foot in a manner which will not compromise the horse's balance or normal stance.
2. Prior to picking up the horse's foot, make sure the horse is standing in a balanced four-cornered stance.
3. Prior to picking up the horse's foot, introduce yourself to the horse, gentling him before picking up the foot in a professionally acceptable manner.
4. In the event there is a reaction to digital palpation of any area, allow the horse to calm himself and become accustomed to the palpation by patient repetition. This will help the inspector discriminate between pain and hypersensitivity.
5. The degree of pressure to be utilized during digital palpation shall not exceed that amount of pressure necessary to flatten the ball of the thumb. the distal thumb joint should not be "cocked" during palpation.

## **III. Riding**

In order to assist in the evaluation, the DQP may request the horse to be ridden under saddle to further observe the horse's freedom of movement and to assist in completion of the examination.

In the event of uncertainty in overall findings, the benefit of the doubt should go in favor of the horse.

Endorsement of the foregoing represents the agreement of the following cosigners:

RAYMOND C. MILLER, D.V.M.

DEWITT H. OWEN, D.V.M.

D. L. PROCTOR, JR., D.V.M.

RAM C. PUROHIT, D. V. M., Ph. D.

JOHN R. RAGAN, D.V.M.

J. T. VAUGHAN, D.V.M.

**Webmaster's note:**

This list of Veterinarians represents a wealth of equine knowledge. Among them are three former presidents of the American Association of Equine Practitioners; the then Dean of the Veterinary School

at Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama; a Veterinarian on staff at Auburn who was the author of the renowned "Auburn Study" on action devices; two field Veterinarians in Tennessee; and the State Veterinarian of Tennessee.

[Top of Page](#)

[Back to Home Page](#)

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