**Amendment Strips USDA 2013 Horsemeat Inspection Funding**

Funding for USDA inspections at U.S. horse processing plants would be rescinded under an amendment to the Agricultural Appropriations Bill for fiscal 2013.

Prior to 2005, USDA personnel carried out horsemeat food safety inspections at U.S. horse processing plants. In 2006 Congress voted to strip the USDA of funding for inspections at facilities that process horsemeat for human consumption. Department of Agriculture funding bills contained amendments denying the USDA funding for horse processing plant inspections until November 2011. At this time Congress passed an appropriations bill that did not contain language specifically forbidding the agency from using federal dollars to fund horse slaughter plant inspections. Since then, developers have proposed horse processing plants in Missouri, Oregon, and New Mexico.

Introduced by U.S. Rep. Jim Moran and passed by the full House Appropriations Committee, the new amendment reduces funding for USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service meat facility inspections to $9 million below the fiscal year 2012 level. The amendment also deprives the USDA of funds to inspect U.S. horse processing plants.

Moran said that funding horse processing plant inspections would consume resources at the expense of funding for chicken, pork, and beef inspections.

The Agricultural Appropriations bill has advanced for a full House vote.—Pat Raia

**USDA Rule Requires Minimum Soring Penalties**

Horse Industry Organizations (HIOs) managing gaited horse shows must now asscss minimum penalties for Horse Protection Act (HPA) violations found at events they manage under a rule published in June by the USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS).

The USDA enforces the HPA (which prohibits soring), certifies HIOs, and trains Designated Qualified Persons to carry out HPA compliance inspections.

In September 2010, APHIS spokesman David Sacks said auditors from the USDA’s Inspector General’s Office recommended that APHIS develop and implement protocols to more consistently penalize HPA violators. On June 5, after a public comment phase, the agency published the rule in its final form, Sacks said.

Under the final rule all APHIS-certified HIOs must assess penalties equal to or exceeding minimum levels.

**All APHIS-certified HIOs must assess penalties that equal or exceed minimum levels.**

The final rule requires that HPA violation suspensions be issued to any individuals responsible for showing a sored horse; exhibiting a sored horse; entering or allowing the entry of that horse in a show or exhibition; selling, auctioning, or offering the horse for sale or auction; and shipping, moving, delivering, or receiving a sore horse with reason to believe that such horse was to be shown, exhibited, sold, auctioned, or offered for sale.

Anyone suspended for HPA violations will not be permitted to show or exhibit any horse or judge or manage any horse show, horse exhibition or horse sale/auction for the duration of the suspension. The final rule also stiffens penalties for repeat HPA violators.

The final rule took effect July 9.—Pat Raia

**WEVA’s First Strategic Planning Session**

The WEVA Board of Directors met June 22-23 in Paris, France, to complete the organization’s first strategic planning session. The board met at the Association of French Equine Veterinarians headquarters, and was hosted by Richard Corde, DVM, and Anne Couroucé-Malblanc, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ECEIM. Amy Hogan, SPHR, assistant Provost at Virginia Tech, facilitated the planning session.

The meeting began with an analysis of recent WEVA Congresses and Intermediate Meetings, during which the board evaluated ways to improve continuing education meeting management. A particularly challenging but necessary task the board identified is the need to provide language translation of the presentations to best accommodate attendees from all countries.

The proposed specific areas of professional interest for next year’s WEVA Congress in Budapest, Hungary, include most aspects of equine health care. Additionally, organizers are considering an equine welfare session, possibly focusing on the welfare of working Draft horses.

Additionally, Bianca Schwarz, DVM, DrMedVet, Dipl. ECEIM, from Germany presented an update on the growth of “Young WEVA,” the organization’s initiative designed to interest and inform younger colleagues in WEVA’s mission.

The rest of the meeting agenda focused on revisiting the WEVA Mission and Core Values and charting future initiatives based on these principles.

Directors and officers attending this meeting traveled from Australia, England, India, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United States.

—Harry Werner, VMD, WEVA Board Member

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