

Advocacy

Learn how AQHA takes an active role in the political, legislative and regulatory process.

The American Quarter Horse Association continues to increase its role in public policy and advocacy concerning the American Quarter Horse and all horses. Learn how AQHA is taking an active role in the political, legislative and regulatory process. In addition to increasing advocacy of the American Quarter Horse in public policy, AQHA continues to keep the horse as its foremost concern by providing programs to members promoting the health and wellbeing of their American Quarter Horse.

Current Legislation for 2015

S.A.F.E Act

The House of Representatives introduced (HR 1942) [The Safeguard American Food Exports Act of 2015](#). The bill is similar to legislation introduced in past Congresses in that it would in effect prohibit the slaughter of horses in the U.S. and the export of horses for slaughter, such as to Canada or Mexico. The bill provides that horses are not raised for human consumption and that they are frequently treated with drugs that pose a serious threat to human health if eaten. The bill is intended to protect the public from such risk by making it illegal under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to knowingly sell or transport horses or parts of horses in interstate or foreign commerce for purposes of human consumption. Like recent legislation dealing with horse slaughter, this bill is different from other bills introduced in earlier Congresses that focused on welfare concerns for horses. This bill cites health concerns as the primary rationale to prohibit the sale or export of horses or horsemeat for human consumption. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the House Committee on Agriculture.

AQHA's Position: Oppose. [AQHA Position Statement on Horse Processing](#)

Political Action Committee or Q-PAC

AQHA has established a [Political Action Committee](#) with the goal of educating members of Congress about the size and scope of the American Quarter Horse industry. The PAC is a campaigning method that is funded only by donations. With the [AQHA Political Action Committee](#), members have the opportunity to contribute funds to ensure AQHA's voice in Washington, D.C., is strong and powerful. The PAC's aim is to secure resources to make an impact on the horse industry and those who are involved with it by supporting elected officials in Washington, D.C., or

candidates seeking federal legislative offices. You can [make a contribution online](#) or call AQHA at (806) 376-4811 and ask for the public policy department.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Q-Contact Program

Q-Contact was created to develop a key contact system to enable AQHA to expand its efforts in national public policy work. Q-Contact advocacy is based on select industry leaders developing a strong working relationship with lawmakers and their staff. The Q-Contact program goal is to identify and empower at least 50 members – at least one in each state – to develop key constituent relationships with selected members of Congress who might be in a position to advance policies and regulatory goals of AQHA. Q-Contacts are working to become a reliable resource and expert partner for lawmakers and their staffs.

American Horse Council

AQHA is a strong partner with the American Horse Council, which is the organization that represents all segments of our nation's diverse equine industry. AHC works daily to represent equine interests and opportunities. Founded in 1969, AHC was organized by a group of horsemen concerned about federal legislation affecting their industry. They recognized the need for national support and coordinated industry action in Washington, D.C. AQHA is a major supporter of AHC and encourages AQHA members to join and learn more. Visit the American Horse Council online at www.horsecouncil.org.

Unwanted Horse Coalition

The Unwanted Horse Coalition is a vital part of the American Horse Council, providing options and resources should a horse ever become unwanted. AQHA strongly supports the Unwanted Horse Coalition's efforts in educating the equine industry regarding owner responsibilities and services available to them. Learn more about the Unwanted Horse Coalition at www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org.

Full Circle

AQHA is proud to provide a service to members that allows them to make decisions regarding horses they've owned, cared for or simply enjoyed watching in the past. AQHA members have the option to be notified should a horse they enroll in the Full Circle program ever become unwanted and need assistance. From there, the person who enrolled the horse can help make important decisions for the horse's future, whether

it's a retirement home or providing funds to help care for that horse
The theory behind Full Circle is to provide caring owners with the option to provide long-term care to horses they've bred or previously owned. There is no financial obligation. The options are numerous and it's encouraged that the person who enrolled the horse work with the current owner to come up with the best plan for that horse's future.

Horse Processing

The following is AQHA's position statement on legislation concerning horse processing:

"First and foremost, the American Quarter Horse Association unequivocally supports the humane treatment of horses and vigorous enforcement of reasonable state and federal laws intended for that purpose.

It is this fervent dedication to the welfare of the horse that drives AQHA to address the difficult issues related to humane care, transportation and disposition of all breeds of horses.

Therefore, AQHA supports and joins with the Unwanted Horse Coalition whose mission is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and to improve their welfare through education, and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety, and responsible care and disposition of these horses.

End-of-life issues for horses are personal and should remain the right of the individual horse owner.

AQHA opposes abolishing the option of horse processing until there are other provisions to take care of more than 150,000 horses that meet that end each year. Consistent with positions established by the American Association of Equine Practitioners and American Veterinary Medical Association, AQHA supports the humane, USDA supervised end-of-life process as a much better option than starvation, neglect or inhumane treatment inside or outside of the United States.

To date, no proposed state or federal law has addressed funding of care for unwanted horses, long-term placement of affected horses or established guidelines for standards of care at retirement and rescue facilities. Failing to address these core issues adversely affects the welfare of horses.

Additionally, horses as livestock are personal property protected under the United States Constitution. Any law that would result in "taking" of personal property without just compensation or valid purpose is a violation of an individual's constitutional rights. Furthermore, it is a violation of the Commerce Clause to unreasonably restrict interstate trade of property.

Therefore, AQHA continues to oppose the provisions of state or federal legislation intended to: (a) prohibit the humane end-of-life processing of horses; and (b) prohibit the humane transport of horses that may be destined to processing plants.”

To contact AQHA regarding horse processing, please use our [online contact form](#).

Owner Responsibility

AQHA believes it's the owner's responsibility and, ultimately, their choice regarding decisions concerning the welfare of their horse(s). The Association encourages responsible ownership practices and management that will reduce the number of unwanted horses. AQHA recognizes that the processing of unwanted horses is currently a necessary aspect of the equine industry because it provides a humane euthanasia alternative for horses that might otherwise continue a life of discomfort and pain, or inadequate care or abandonment. AQHA has actively supported legislation to ensure the safe and humane transportation of horses that are bound for processing facilities and backed guidelines for how horses must be treated at the facilities. AQHA supports other choices for unwanted horses, including euthanasia by injection, life in an equine retirement facility, donation to a college or university, or other options.

AQHA Stewards

The stewards program was started by AQHA to develop a network of individuals to be advocates for the horse and help ensure fair competition. Stewards also help prevent inhumane practices and unsportsmanlike conduct at AQHA shows and events. The health and wellbeing of the American Quarter Horse is our utmost concern and stewards help to ensure that. Stewards answer exhibitor questions about rules, identify and document inhumane treatment, evaluate any unsafe conditions regarding the show grounds, and guide others on acceptable training practices and equipment. AQHA stewards are trained and tested on AQHA's rulebook, the stewards training manual, and their ability to handle difficult situations professionally. Most importantly, stewards help protect the breed, advance animal welfare and help ensure the integrity of the competition. A [newly developed system](#) by the [AQHA Animal Welfare Commission](#) helps protect the horse by defining inhumane practices, outlining acceptable training equipment at any AQHA show and outlining [a penalty system](#) for individuals who violate the rules designed to protect the horse.