

AHCnews



Lawmakers Boost Funds for Equine Assisted Therapy

Buried in the text of the 2,232 page omnibus spending bill enacted in late March, Congress included a provision to increase funds available for equine-assisted therapy by \$1 million in FY2018. Within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Veterans' Benefits Administration provision, the law appropriates "an additional \$1 million ... to the Adaptive Sports Program to encourage VA to increase ... grants for equine therapy for mental health issues." A committee statement that accompanies the legislative text goes on to outline the rationale for the increased funds by acknowledging that there are "promising results reported using equine therapy for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder." The enhanced equine therapy provision traces its roots to a pro-horse industry amendment that Rep. Barr (R-KY) offered to a FY2018 spending bill in late July 2017, directing Congress to allocate more resources to VA for equine therapy.

While addressing members of the Congressional Horse Caucus during an event unveiling the horse industry's 2017 economic impact study in early March, Rep. Barr (R-KY) discussed the importance of expanding access to evidence-based equine treatment for veterans who've suffered trauma during combat. According to the economic study, equine-assisted therapy operations support more than 6700 jobs and generate \$311.7 million in annual revenues. If you would like more information about the equine therapy provision or other federal appropriations issues, please contact Bryan Brendle at bbrendle@horsecouncil.org.

House Lawmakers Deliver Horse Industry Priorities in 2018 Farm Bill

Following a weeks-long standoff over work requirements for supplemental nutrition assistance plan (SNAP) benefits, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) released the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2) on April 12. Fortunately for the horse industry, the 641-page bill includes some of the AHC's top priorities: authorization of a new National Animal Disaster Preparedness and Response (NADPR) program; additional support for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network; and creation of the National Animal Health Vaccine Bank that will prioritize threats posed by Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), among other threats. A preliminary review of the bill shows that although lawmakers generally met industry's full funding request – totaling \$250 million for the priority issues outlined above – for FY2019 only, the bill reduces those funds during subsequent fiscal years. For example, industry requested \$70 million each year to fund the NADPR, but received \$30 million for 2020 and beyond. Also industry requested \$30 million per year to support the NAHLN, the bill authorizes up to \$15 million for 2020 and beyond. Next steps for the House farm bill are not yet certain. AHC will share more details related to the legislation as they emerge

To view a copy of the legislation, please click here: https://agriculture.house.gov/uploaded-files/agriculture_and_nutrition_act_of_2018.pdf

Spring 2018

- 2 National Park Service Fees
- 2 USDA-APHIS Meeting
- 2 National Endangered Equine Summit
- 3 AHC Annual Meeting
- 4 2nd Q Webinar Topic
- 4 Help the UHC Prevent Unwanted Horses





National Parks Hike Entrance Fees, Address Needed Maintenance

The National Park Service (NPS) announced a new entrance fee structure intended to raise money to repair the nation's aging park infrastructure, which includes a maintenance backlog of \$11.6 billion. Although many parks will raise entrance fee prices beginning June 1, 2018, others will not become effective until January 1, 2020. The agency states that despite the modest increase in prices for park passes, more than two-thirds of the national parks will remain free to riders and other members of the public. To read the announcement from NPS which includes new price schedules, please see the following link: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/04-12-2018-entrance-fees.htm>.

AHC Participates in USDA-APHIS Stakeholder Meeting

Every year the AHC is invited to participate in a stakeholder meeting with the Administrator of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Held in Washington D.C. on February 15th, this meeting provides the opportunity for the equine industry to relay the health and regulatory concerns of note to the decision makers at USDA-APHIS. The list of topics discussed include:

- The industry requests a timeline for the implementation of the changes to the CEM 60 day waiver to a 90 day waiver.
- The industry supports a rule mandating the microchipping of all horses entering the United States and the subsequent recording and retention of those ID numbers by the USDA in a searchable database.
- The industry continues to have concerns with the level of collaboration and uniformity between the Import/Export sector of the equine industry and the NIES staff in regional offices.
- The industry requests the USDA implement a 45-90 day pre-import negative Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) test requirement for all horses entering through a Southern Border Port.
- The industry requests the USDA encourage the OIE to expedite validation of the Western Blot and CELISA tests for Glanders.
- The industry requests a new review to be done by USDA staff as soon as possible regarding Saudi Arabia's status as free from African Horse Sickness.
- The industry requests a review of the methods and protocols in which countries are declared CEM free.
- With the recent personnel changes within the USDA, the industry would appreciate a list of USDA staff who are responsible for equine health, welfare and transportation be made available to the equine sector.
- The industry requests an update of the current status of Chinese import/export protocols and the accompanying health certificates.
- SAHOs are interested in an update to the 2013 request that USDA provide a status update on the whole genome sequencing for Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP).
- SAHOs are interested in the status of the 2014 request for the USDA Accreditation Program to develop additional equine specific modules.
- The industry requests an update on the status of the proposed Revised EIA Guidelines coming from the 2015 USDA EIA Discussion Group.
- The industry requests financial support of the Equine Disease Communication Center by the USDA at the same funding level as FY2015 and FY2016.

AHC Staff Attends National Endangered Equine Summit

In February, AHC staff attended The Livestock Conservancy's (TLC) first National Endangered Equine Summit. For the last two decades a dramatic decline in the American horse market has put a stop to horse breeding on many farms. Nowhere is this hitting harder than those working with what the TLC consider endangered horse breeds. Horses such as the Akhal-Teke, the Caspian and Hackney horses are now what they consider to be "endangered".



The TLC believes that “heritage breed” horses are an irreplaceable reservoir of genetic diversity and each lost breed is significant for the future of the horse industry. Through a collaboration with Texas A&M University and Virginia Tech, The Livestock Conservancy invited endangered horse breed associations, academics, and discipline groups to participate in a National Endangered Equine Summit. Together with specialists from the scientific, rare breed, and general horse communities, these invitees were tasked with identifying the leading causes of breed population declines, determine what actions could be taken to stabilize the loss of breeds, and develop a list of achievable and fundable action points.

A priority for the summit was the development of long lasting partnerships between all of the organizations in attendance. To that end, a working group was established within the TLC to maintain these relationships. The AHC has been asked to participate in this effort. A full white paper by The Livestock Conservancy with a list of the action items that came from this meeting is due to be released soon.

Registration Open for AHC’s Annual Meeting & National Issues Forum

Registration is now open for the American Horse Council’s (AHC) 2018 Annual Meeting and National Issues Forum. Registration information, along with a tentative schedule is available on the AHC Website here: <http://www.horsecouncil.org/events/ahc-annual-meeting-national-issues-forum-2/>.

The theme of the National Issues Forum will be “Let’s Capitalize On It!” and will focus on ways the equine industry can learn and grow from both equine and outside industry segments as well as expanding technology beneficial to both humans and equines.

“We are really looking forward to our National Issues Forum this year,” said AHC President Julie Broadway. “We have some exciting and engaging speakers lined up to talk about a variety of issues such as public perception of an industry, emerging technologies that benefit our industry and our horses, how other sports segments grew their youth pipeline, and of course a deeper dive into the results of our 2017 Economic Impact Study.”

The Forum will kick off Tuesday with speaker Luis Benitez, Director of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, where he will give an overview of his roles and responsibilities, as well as explain how other states could adopt a similar model. Following Mr. Benitez will be a panel titled “Survey Says” and will examine various data trends within the equine industry over the past several years. The morning will also include a youth engagement panel, “Building the pipeline of future horse enthusiasts,” and will feature representatives from the PGA “First Tee” program and the Outdoor Industry Association’s “Outdoor Nation.”

The afternoon session will start with Dan Ashe, President and CEO of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). AZA is a nonprofit association dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science and recreation. Noted author and journalist Fran Jurga will also be speaking on emerging technologies in the equine industry. Also speaking will be Anne Poulson, Dr. Yuval Neria and Dr. Prudence Fisher from the Man ‘o War Project and Columbia University Medical Center presenting their methodology and findings from their clinical research to determine the effectiveness of EAAT on military veterans suffering from PTSD. Also include panels of Congressional representatives, and equine aftercare, followed by round table discussion on topics of interests.

New this year, vendors will be set up to provide live demonstrations of emerging technologies including health monitoring sensors for horses and virtual reality demonstrations.

The AHC’s Annual Meeting will take place Sunday, June 10th – Wednesday, June 13th. Sunday and Monday various committees of the AHC will meet. The Annual Meeting and National Issues Forum will take place on Tuesday and are open to both AHC members and non-members- we encourage anyone involved in the equine industry to attend to learn about new developments and how they can become involved!



AHC's 2nd Quarter Webinar Topic Announced

The topic for the AHC's 2nd quarter webinar for 2018 will be Microchipping. The webinar will take place on Monday, May 14th at 3:00 pm ET.

Presenting will be Angela Pelzel-McCluskey, DVM, MS from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), TC Lane from the United States Trotting Association (USTA), and Ashley Furst, Director of the Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC).

Dr. McCluskey is an Equine Epidemiologist for USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services, and will present on the "Traceability of Equine Microchips" and demonstrate some of the successes and challenges encountered when a horse with a chip is found and efforts are made to try to trace that chip to figure out who the horse is.

TC Lane is the Director of Registry and Member Services for the USTA, and will be presenting a new microchipping requirement that the USTA will be putting into place where in 2019 all foals will be required to be implanted with a microchip. The microchips would replace freeze brands and lip tattoos as means of identification for Standardbreds.

Finally, UHC Director Ashley Furst will discuss the new program "Operation Chip" introduced in January 2018. The program currently provides free microchips and registration of that microchip to stallions getting gelded through the Operation Gelding program.

The webinar is open to both AHC members and non-members—we encourage everyone to attend! To register for the webinar, please click [here](#).

Help the UHC Prevent Unwanted Horses

The mission of the American Horse Council Foundation's (AHC) Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC) is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and to improve their welfare through education and industry collaboration. Of course, one of the best ways to reduce the number of unwanted horses is to prevent unwanted breeding.

One of the UHC's most successful programs, Operation Gelding, began in August 2010. Operation Gelding provides guidance, materials, promotional, and financial support to groups that wish to host low- or no-cost gelding clinics. The impetus for these clinics is that the castration of a stallion will help prevent overbreeding, in turn reducing the number of unwanted horses. Castration will also produce a calmer horse that is more rideable, trainable, saleable, and adoptable, allowing him to be successful in several careers. In January 2018, a Voucher program was introduced within Operation Gelding to continue to encourage individual owners to continue to castrate their stallions, but may not have the financial means to do so.

To date, the UHC has aided in the castration of over 2,500 stallions through both clinics and the voucher program. We were only able to provide this financial support due to generous grants and donations received from organizations like the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) Foundation, DeWitt Fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County, National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, and the Kentucky Horse Council.

Moving forward, we are hoping that you will be able to join us in our mission to reduce the number of unwanted horses, and consider donating to Operation Gelding to help us keep our incredible momentum going. Every day, the UHC receives applications for clinics and voucher to help aid owners in the castration of their stallions. Ensuring unwanted breeding does not happen is a critical component of the UHC's mantra of "Own Responsibly."

If you have any questions about the UHC, Operation Gelding, or other programs that the UHC offers, please contact UHC Director Ashley Furst at afurst@horsecouncil.org or 202-846-1607.