

A STATEMENT BY HORSE WELFARE ALLIANCE OF CANADA (HWAC)

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Throughout the Canadian equine sector of the livestock industry and across governments there are various definitions and interpretations of *equine* as 'livestock' and/or as 'companion animals' that are creating confusion and may be resulting in a negative effect to the equine sector.

Livestock is defined as animals raised in an agricultural setting. Equine can only be successfully and humanely raised in an agricultural setting. Regardless of what we do with our equine the basic format and practices to raise and rear are the same. Possibly, we should appreciate what it takes to get a horse on the ground and the health and welfare of the animal throughout its life – not at what career or use it may have or has had.

Currently the designation of equine as livestock within provincial and federal legislation, regulations, policies, bylaws and rules is inconsistent. This causes confusion that is challenging for producers, owners and custodians and creates disadvantages when compared to other livestock sectors in Canada. It is hereby submitted industry representatives must be clear and concise to request definition of equine as livestock unilaterally within Canada.

Consistent regulations and definitions regarding equine as livestock across Canada would improve the viability, impact and understanding of the Canada equine industry.

- Wm. H.L (Bill) desBarres, Chair Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada

Additional Information

LEGAL STATUS OF EQUINE IN CANADA

A clear designation of equine as livestock would define the realities of commercial and private breeding, owning and attending to the health and welfare of our horses, donkeys and mules. The designation is important to ensure equines are not improperly classified as companion animals, similar to household pets.

There are some members of the equine species that are excellent companion animals and some that provide therapeutic benefits. These animals are carefully selected and individually trained for purpose and safety and do not represent a significant percentage of equine in Canada.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1. **Federal** regulation of equine and related activities comes under the purview of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Part of the objective of AAFC is to improve and maintain farm income; develop and expand markets; protect the herds and carry out related research. AAFC provides valuable technical expertise and monetary support for such things as research respecting the prevention of equine diseases such as Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA), Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV), Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis (VEE), Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) and Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA).

CFIA is responsible for the enforcement of the *Health of Animals Act, Health of Animals Regulations* (Part XII – Transport of Animals) and humane slaughter issues fall under the *Meat Inspection Regulations*, *Meat Inspection Act* and all issues related to federally Reportable and Notifiable diseases.

2. **Provincial** governments are responsible for the regulation of some livestock related activities within the province. Many provincial agriculture departments provide valuable support and assistance to the equine industry.

Each province and/or territory has animal anti-cruelty laws, some contract the enforcement of these regulations to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). In most

cases the provincial/territorial regulations are related to humane treatment and welfare of livestock. **If equine is to be considered non-livestock then livestock anti-cruelty laws, regulations and welfare issues may not apply**

If livestock status for equine is not recognized there is a possibility of losing the already limited financial support received federally and provincially respecting research, regulation, disaster relief and emergency preparedness.

3. Many **municipal** governments in Canada have bylaws respecting livestock including equine. Municipal and provincial authorities and citizens have different priorities for livestock and other animals such as pets. This confusion creates a waste of resources and increases risk during emergent, evacuations and/or rescue situations.

TAX ISSUES

Currently Canada Revenue Agency recognizes equine owners and breeders who declare income and deduct expenses resultant from owning, breeding and/or marketing as farmers (agriculture). Currently equine owners and breeders are treated differently from other livestock producers respecting goods and sales taxes. Equines are the only livestock not zero-rated for federal GST and where applicable, provincial HST. Taxations on feed and care items is unique compared to other multi-use species such as rabbits, lamas and ostriches etc. This discrimination may be an unfair financial burden on equine business operators and is inconsistent in the agriculture industry.

A CHANGE IN THE LIVESTOCK DEFINITION OF EQUINE?

Some individuals wish to change the definition of equines from livestock to “companion animal” or “pets” possibly because they believe it would affect the use of equine meat for human consumption. The decision to send any livestock to a processing facility to provide meat for human consumption or to eat meat, is a democratic choice that should not be mandated by Canadian law but the process thereof should be regulated under food safety guidelines (CFIA). Changing the classification of equine from livestock may not affect processing or consumption.

SUMMARY

Equine have long been considered livestock in the eyes of most Canadians and throughout the world. This does not prevent individuals from enjoying their equines as companion animals. This is a personal choice and privilege, just as it is the right of others to continue to respectfully care for them as livestock.

Considering the Canadian population of equine animals to be in excess of one million it is hereby submitted the number and/or percentage of those equine used, trained or deployed as “pet/companion/therapeutic” animals is less than one percent of the population and therefore to declare all equine animals to be other than livestock misrepresents the livestock/agriculture industry.

Changing or amending the legal definition of all equines to companion animals under law will adversely affect the health and welfare of our equine population. Livestock owners and others are encouraged to voice an opinion that is based on fact and relative issues as opposed to emotion. The general classification of all or any part of the equine species as “pet/companion/therapeutic” animal is misleading, creates inconsistency and places equine owners in an inequitable position within the agricultural industry.