

Public Workshop for Proposed Animal Care Standards

Horses Workshop Minutes

February 21, 2012, 3:30 – 5 PM

Scope of Workshop:

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss animal care standards for horses. The overall goal for this meeting was for DEC to hear further comment on issues discussed at the previous meeting and to hear general comments on the draft version of the regulations. Approximately 10 people attended. Comments are from participants except where noted as from DEC.

1. Open items from last meeting on horses:

- Shelter. Various aspects of shelter were discussed. Three conceptual approaches used by other states were presented for comments.
- Shelter Approach #1:
 - I. Shelter must be available for horses in cases of extreme weather conditions. (This does not prescribe a structure)
 - II. Any enclosure where a horse is primarily kept shall be of sufficient size to enable the horse to comfortably stand up, turn around and lie down.
 - III. The minimum ceiling height of a structure must be one foot above the horse's head when held at its highest level.
 - IV. All enclosures and shelters must be free of hazards that may cause injury to confined horses. (or: buildings, premises, and conveyances used in conjunction with equines shall be kept free of sharp objects, protrusions, or other materials that are likely to cause injury.)
 - V. Excessive feces, urine, mud, or other waste products must not accumulate within the housing enclosures or to the extent that these cause unhealthy conditions.
 - VI. Ventilation in enclosed areas must be sufficient to control excessive ambient temperature and prevent the accumulation of toxic gases, such as ammonia.
 - VII. Horses confined to minimal enclosed areas must have access to adequate exercise area. Confined is defined as being housed within the designated space continually, without free access to a paddock, turnout, or other exercise area.

Comments on Approach #1:

- Equine Association, Homer: Like #1 the best overall. Prefers structure requirement but some horses do okay with trees.
 - Anchorage Animal Control: #1 looks similar to Anchorage Code, seems a good reasonable approach.
 - Alaska Equine Rescue: Likes #1 in general for enforcement.
 - Likes mandatory exercise area.
- Shelter Approach #2:
 - i. The minimum ceiling height of a shelter must be six inches higher than the top of the ears when head is at highest level.
 - ii. A 12' X 12' stall is the minimum size of a primary enclosure for an adult horse.

Comments on Approach #2:

 - Too short.
 - Veterinarian: Setting a size of stalls may not be the best approach. Horse size varies.
 - Total stall confinement is wrong.
- Shelter Approach #3:
 - I. All housing systems must meet the following requirements:
 - 1) Must provide a clean and safe environment that promotes the health, welfare and performance of equines at all stages of their lives;
 - 2) Have a stocking density that allows for all equines to easily lie down at the same time in a normal resting posture and be able to easily stand back up at all stages of production, and in addition all animals must be able to access feed and water without excessive competition;
 - 3) Must provide access to facilities or natural features that provide reasonable protection from adverse weather conditions and predators;
 - 4) Enclosures, including fencing, must be designed and maintained so as to minimize injury and provide for the safety of humans and other animals;
 - 5) Environmental management must be designed to control parasite infestation and minimize insect infestations;
 - II. Indoor housing systems must meet the following requirements:
 - 1) If stalls are used, they must be cleaned and replenished **regularly** with clean, good quality and absorbent bedding; and,
 - 2) If confined in a stall, the responsible party must provide access for exercise unless medically prohibited.

- III. Outdoor housing systems must meet the following requirements:
 - 1) Must seek to minimize prolonged exposure to adverse environmental conditions that compromise the animal's health and safety; and,
 - 2) If open lots are used, they must be maintained to promote proper drainage away from resting areas and feed and water.
- IV. Tack and/or harness must fit properly and be well maintained so as to minimize the potential for injuries.

Comments on Approach #3:

- Some places may not be able to provide absorbent bedding.
 - Tack fitting may be difficult to achieve.
 - Can there be language that says what is "preferred" in regulation?
DEC Comment: "Preferred" or "recommended" things can be described in other educational materials, but cannot be written that way in regulation.
 - Likes addressing tack. Saddle sores should be prevented.
DEC Comment: We will review other regulations for other possible approaches to this issue. Unsuitable tack can cause unnecessary injury. (OPEN)
 - We should say something about sores/injury, etc.
 - E-mail participant: Any shelter, whether natural or man-made must protect from the elements (temperature, wind, precipitation).
 - We should remove clause about protection from predators. This is not practical in Alaska.
- Water: Possible approaches to providing for adequate water were discussed. Hydration status as judged by a veterinarian is an obvious endpoint standard, but does not give any specific guidance for owners or actionable criteria for law enforcement. Hard frozen ice alone may not be accessible enough to maintain hydration. Most other states simply have general rules that adequate water must be provided. Although continuous access is preferred, twice daily is the most common minimum required frequency.

Comments on Water:

- I. *DEC Comment:* The Department of Law has the opinion that "water" could include snow, and that use of the word snow or ice is not advisable to further refine references to water availability.
- II. Free ranging horses may need separate rules from those in close confinement. Prefer separate categories.
- III. What about an endpoint of adequate hydration?
- IV. E-mail: Lack of water and just eating snow causes colic.

V. *DEC Comment*: The goal is to make a set of standards that are applicable to all horses; separating horses into categories (pet horses, work horses, free ranging horses) can cause some confusion and difficulty evaluating a situation and also requires generating a definition for each category.

1) We could remove the word “daily” from this original draft clause and it would cover most conceivable situations: “Each horse shall have **daily** access to water in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy the animal’s physiologic needs as evidenced by the horse’s hydration status”

• Hoof care: The first draft requires “routine hoof care” be provided. “Routine” is not further defined. Possible hoof care approaches include:

- I. All horses must receive proper foot care to maintain hooves in a functional condition.
- II. The horse should receive adequate hoof care to allow the horse to stand in a normal posture and move at all gaits without discomfort.

Comments:

- 1) Farrier wants strong clause on hoof care.
- 2) Likes #1.
- 3) “Functional condition” leaves room for abuse.
- 4) What about “normal functional condition”?
- 5) Can there be educational pieces in the regulation?

DEC Comment: Not exactly. Some states regulations actually directly reference Co-operative Extension Service Guidelines as their rules. We will research for further ideas on this approach.

(OPEN)

- 6) Suggest “proper hoof care to prevent discomfort”
- 7) Suggest “prevent discomfort” followed by a reference.
- 8) It might be feasible to merge these two clauses into better verbiage. “All horses must receive adequate hoof care to maintain hooves in a functional condition to allow the horse to stand in a normal posture and move at all gaits without discomfort as determined by a veterinary exam”
- 9) *DEC Comment*: Determination of how much a bad hoof is contributing to lameness might be difficult. Physical exam can usually determine if a foot is painful, but “moving at all gaits” might be too complex.

2. Open forum.

• *DEC Comment*: The 28 hour rule for transportation is under legal research right now. Canada has its own rules for allowing animals off of trailers. We will be

getting a legal opinion on how such a rule might be enforced for border crossings. (OPEN)

- Where did the 28 hour rule come from? It is too long to keep a horse on a trailer.

DEC Comment: It is the federal standard for interstate movement of animals in the U.S.

- Trailer accommodations may vary widely, from a large to a much smaller size. This could have a bearing on how long the horse should be forced to stay on the trailer. Ability to extend the head and neck are important.

- How would anybody know how long a horse was kept on a trailer?

DEC Comment: It would probably require an eyewitness.

- Veterinarian (general comment on all approaches to shelter): In a confinement situation, the definition of shelter should not be too restrictive.

- Will there rules specifically addressing physical abuse?

DEC Comment: We will hold a future meeting on humane euthanasia and physical abuse.

- There is a bill pending on animal cruelty. It would increase the penalty for neglect of five or more animals from a misdemeanor to a felony.