

Statement on U.S. Court of Appeals Decision in Alleged Tennessee Walking Horse Abuse Case

Decision Sticks with Trend of Perpetuating Tennessee Walking Horse Abuse

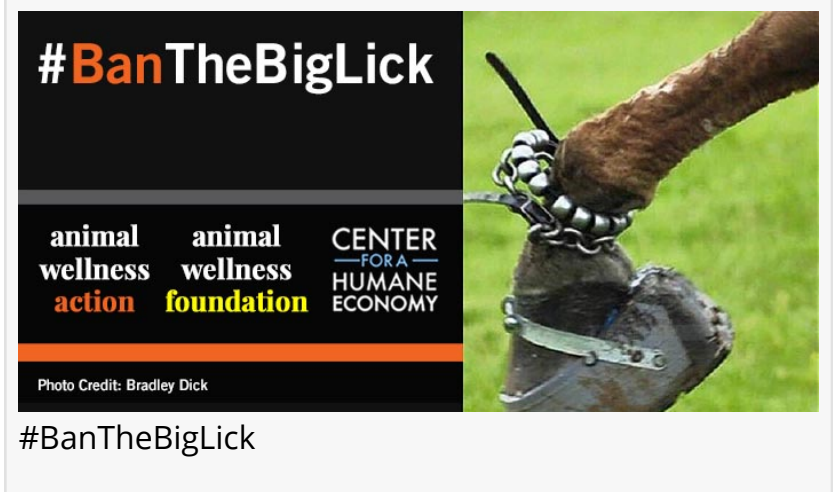
WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, February 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/

-- Today, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia remanded a case back to the United States

Department of Agriculture for a new hearing before agency Administrative Law Judges in the case of [Joe Fleming Stables v. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture](#).

[Fleming, a longtime violator](#) of the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970, who won the 1983

Tennessee Walking Horse World Grand Championship aboard Ebony's Bold Courier, has been granted the right to a new hearing on alleged incidents of soring Tennessee Walking Horses.



“

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Marty Irby

Soring is the intentional infliction of pain to horses' feet and limbs by applying caustic chemicals such as mustard oil, croton oil, kerosene, and other caustic chemicals to the skin or inserting sharp objects into the hooves to achieve an artificial high-step known as the “Big Lick.”

Today's court decision comes on the heels of [the election of Jack Heffington](#), another longtime violator of the HPA, as president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' &

Exhibitors' Association – the breed registry established in 1935 in Lewisburg, Tennessee – just last week, a move that signals the breed registry remains dedicated to perpetuating the abuse.

“The USDA and the federal courts continue to struggle with the enforcement of the Horse Protection Act and allow the horrific practice of soring to run rampant,” said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action who was recently honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, II for his life's work to end soring. “I have never seen a more stubborn group determined to keep

animal abuse alive than those engaged in soring. It is my hope that we will see the end of this egregious practice I've witnessed since childhood eradicated in my lifetime."

While the outcome of the new hearing is yet to be seen, there has been a decades-long pattern of failure in the courts allowing soring to run rampant in the Southeastern U.S., and that failure has prevented meaningful enforcement of the HPA that was designed to bring an end to soring. Some previous cases in which the "Big Lick" faction of the walking horse breed has prevailed include: Rowland v. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; Contender Farms v. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; and McSwain v. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to name a few.

The leadership of Animal Wellness Action (AWA) has been spearheading the effort to end soring for the past decade with proposed legislation and regulations that would have closed the loopholes in the Horse Protection Act that allow soring to persist, but those efforts have been thwarted at every turn by those involved in the "Big Lick" faction and the tremendous political capital they have invested in the Congressional Delegations from Kentucky and Tennessee.

In an attempt to finally bring a resolution to the issue of soring, AWA and reformers within the breed worked together to forge a compromise in 2020, that secured the support of the majority of Congressional leaders on both sides of the issue. The effort was supported by numerous high-profile stakeholders but was ultimately sabotaged by the Humane Society of the U.S. and Humane Society Legislative Fund, guaranteeing that soring continues, at least for the foreseeable future.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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