

Wyoming Horse Council News

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February 2010 Meeting Highlights

The Wyoming Horse Council voted unanimously to support the passage and adoption of Senate File 47 - Pari-mutuel wagering - simulcasting . Many thanks to all of you who called, emailed, or in some way contacted your legislators to help get this passed. Also many thanks to Senator John Schiffer and Representative Lisa Shepperson for bringing this forward.

Two new board members were elected - Colleen Gillings from Grover fills the slot for District 3 - Teton, Sublette, Lincoln & Uinta Counties and Jim Purdy from Buffalo fills the slot for District 4 - Sheridan, Johnson & Campbell Counties.

Dr Walt Cook, Assistant State Veterinarian, updated us on three equine disease issues. The first one he discussed was Contagious Equine Metritis or CEM. This is a venereal disease that is carried by a bacteria. It causes mares, after they've been bred, to return to estrus within a couple weeks - they never actually get pregnant. The stallion is the carrier of this disease. There is one exposed stallion in Wyoming that is under quarantine and is yet to be tested. The problem with this disease and the regulatory mechanism that it's under is that the Federal Government regulates CEM and they say any horse that has been exposed has to be tested negative and tested negative to a very, very strict protocol where the animal gets tested several times then must breed to known negative mares. Those mares must conceive and maintain a pregnancy at least initially. The mares themselves have to test negative and then the stallion needs to test negative again. So, it's quite a procedure for an owner to go through. The biggest issue is that with most of the diseases the federal government regulates, it pays for the cost of testing. But this is the one exception. They will pay the lab costs associated with the samples that go to the lab but they won't pay for the cost of the veterinarian taking the samples. When you're sampling the stallion 3 or 4 times and a couple mares to determine if they are pregnant, the vet bills can be pretty significant. The owner of this stallion can't afford to pay for the veterinary fees. The federal government says they're not going to pay for it and the state doesn't have funds to pay for it, so things are at a standoff. Across the US there have been 22 stallions that have been confirmed positive, but those stallions have led to exposure of another 967 horses. Of those, 930 have been tested and certified free. It is a pretty common disease in Europe and most likely it was imported with a stallion from Europe, but it hasn't been proven yet. The USDA has now initiated a national testing project to try to determine just how wide spread the disease is in the US. What they're wanting to do is more or less randomly across the United States test a series of stallions. For Wyoming the goal is 22 stallions to be tested. This is a simple culture where the vet swabs the penis of the stallion. The federal government is needing stallions in Wyoming to

conduct research. We'll have a special guest column by Dr Cook on this topic in the near future.

The second issue he discussed was Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) which is a virus. Although it is a viral disease it has some of the similar signs as venereal disease but it can be transmitted both venereal and aerosol - in the air. It tends to cause abortions as opposed to just an early return but still reproductive failure is the common sign so people often get EVA and CEM mixed up. We do have EVA in Wyoming. We have two stallions that are positive for EVA in the state. With this disease there is much less concern because there is a very good vaccine. We don't even regulate EVA. We do have existing regulations that no animal infected with any disease can come into the state - so an EVA positive stallion cannot come in. Any semen that comes into the state if it is known to be infected has to have prior approval by the State Veterinarian. The vaccine works well but does give a false positive blood test. Mares should be tested before vaccinating. Most states will let that go if you can provide documentation that this animal was tested negative and then within 10 days vaccinated. They'll usually allow the horse in - but not all. Once you vaccinate a horse you may have a hard time getting it into another state. If you know you will be taking that horse some place you might want to check with the state first before you vaccinate. The state vet lab is not doing the EVA test so we have to go out of state - to CSU or someplace to get the test done. Vaccine is readily available now. It is recommended annual boosters be given.

The third and last disease discussed was pyroplasmosis which is a disease that attacks the blood cells of the animals. Symptoms include high fever, the animal goes off feed, muscle tremors, anemia, jaundice, and can be fatal. It is a parasite spread by ticks. If it is caught early enough there are some anti-parasitic medicines that can be used. There have been problems in the US along the southern border with pyroplasmosis from time to time. The current outbreak is a pretty big one. There are 372 horses that are known to be positive, of those 289 came from one particular ranch in Texas. Five horses have been found in Wyoming that came from that ranch, none have tested positive. Wyoming is not particularly concerned about it but in Texas it is still a big deal - there are a lot of horses under quarantine. There is no vaccine for this disease. The best way to control it is through tick pest control.

Amy McLean is the new UW Equine Lecturer and Extension Equine Specialist. Note - the Wyoming Horse Council worked very hard to get this position established. Amy grew up on a mule farm in Georgia and has had much experience showing mules in a lot of different disciplines. She received her BS and MS at the University of Georgia and is finishing her Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Her responsibilities are 60 % teaching, 35% Extension, 5% service. She is a member of Horse Quest community which is an online community through extension.org . Anyone can go to that website, type in a question, which will be answered by specialists from universities across the US.

A monthly online newsletter has been developed in the Animal Science Department called Riding Point with Animal Science - check it out at www.uwyo.edu/Anisci/info.asp?=15931. She has done several adult programs around the state on "Winterizing Your Equine", and "Equine Nutrition". She updated and edited the 4-H Horse Rule Book and presented a program at the State 4-H Leaders Conference on Hippology and Horse Judging 101. UW will host the first Hippology contest this summer in Riverton at the Showcase Showdown. She will be helping with horse camps and clinics in June and July as well as judging some horse shows in the state and will serve as an official for the state horse judging contest. Future plans and needs include adding an equine option at UW so the credits from junior colleges around the state can transfer. UW does not have any horses to use in the program at this time, but Amy is looking for a few sound gentle horses that can be donated or adopted so the students can get some hands-on experience. They could also use donated tack. (Call her if you're interested - 307-766-4373.) UW does currently have a horse judging team, and a polo team as well as a rodeo team.

Jim Swartz, Wyoming Livestock Board Director, discussed the estray/abandoned horse roundup near Green River that took place last summer. Since 1960 til now we've lost half of our AUMs on public lands in western Wyoming and a lot of that has been because of wild horses. In May he was contacted about a private landowner wanting to pay for a gather of the horses and wanted to know what the Wyoming Livestock Board was going to do with the estrays. Initially they thought the numbers would be as high as 100, but after they did a count, they found 266 head. Wild horses are protected by state statute so if they are wild horses and belong to the BLM they are their horses. They got a letter from BLM saying they didn't own those horses - they are not BLM wild horses so whatever happens they are going to be the responsibility of the Wyoming Livestock Board. It cost the private landowner \$375 per horse to gather the horses by helicopter. They gathered over 230 head of horses. A few were branded so they found the owners and luckily they all took them back and settled up. It still left them with almost 230 head of horses. State law says they become estrays when they cannot find the owner of the horse. Estrays belong to the Wyoming Livestock Board. State statute also says they have to sell those horses at a public sale. In the 10 days the Livestock Board had the estrays \$12,000 was spent on food, water and vet for those horses. Since then, the Governor has helped out their budget by establishing an account for estrays which will be a \$50,000 appropriation to help with the situation in the future. He took part of the money out of the animal restitution budget. Since they've done this gather they have had 4 more calls from private land owners wanting to know if they go out and gather the horses, what the WLB is going to do with them. The Wyoming Livestock Board's largest cases in animal welfare revolve around horses - people fall in love with them, then fall out of love with them, then just abandon them and let them starve to death. They've had lots of terrible cases last year. Some county attorneys are taking it serious and we're starting to see some severe penalties for some of the stuff that's going on and it is horrible.

Krissa Thom with the United Organization of the Horse spoke about the ongoing GAO (Government Accounting Office) horse slaughter study. It is expected that there will be Ag Hearings on this issue in April and May. Other state legislatures - South Dakota, Tennessee, Oklahoma - are urging congress to oppose any legislation that is against horse processing and also to reinstate horse processing. Illinois is working to repeal the prohibition on horse meat and to reinstate horse processing there. UOH is conducting a survey on their website- www.unitedorgsofthehorse.org - there are about 2000 participants so far. Also there are petitions on the website regarding the restoration of horse processing and feral horse management. They are still selling raffle tickets on a Dodge truck to help raise money for their efforts. A new website - [//humanewatch.org](http://humanewatch.org) has been established by the Center for Consumer Freedom to monitor what the Humane Society is doing and where their donations are being spent.

Dr Jim Logan, State Veterinarian, talked about the Equine Health Passport. Montana, Idaho, the Navajo tribes and Wyoming are working together. Right now every state has different requirements to be able to enter a state with a horse. This is just in the talking stage right now to see if it can be done. This was discussed at the Livestock Board meeting last month. It would require a change to Chapter 8 Import Rules. Dr Logan asked for a recommendation from the Wyoming Horse Council - our recommendation at this time is that we don't want it to cost more than it currently is, it should be reasonable and must be a regional approach. The Horse Council had a representative at the meeting. More on that later.

The Wyoming Horse Council will have a booth at the Horse Expo April 24 & 25 at the Wyoming State Fair Indoor Equine Center in Douglas - hope to see you there. If you have questions about the Horse Expo call Connie Taylor at 307-358-3862.

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