



### HSUS Investigator Says: "Great American Horse Race Not So Great!"

The Great American Horse Race, monitored constantly by HSUS Investigator, Phil Steward, has become an extremely harsh endurance race. The HSUS sought to put an end to this event at the very beginning. However, The HSUS had no legal recourse until there was actual evidence of cruelty.

According to Steward, this so-called historical re-enactment has attracted owners of 150 horses vying for a \$25,000 first place award. The horses and riders are traveling more than 3,000 miles from New York to California mostly over modern day blacktop and concrete roads. Expecting the horses to be subjected to innumerable possibilities for abuse and cruelty, HSUS had alerted all animal welfare organizations along the route of the endurance race. They were asked to check on the race and to take steps to halt anything considered in violation of the local anti-cruelty laws.

Prior to the race, HSUS issued a press release saying "This race has all the potential ingredients for animal abuse—greed and animal exploitation. It is the contention of The HSUS that the potential for damage to the animals is greater in 1976 than it would have been in the past the riders are trying to recreate."

Steward was on the scene Memorial Day in Frankfort, N.Y., for the start of the race. He was the only representative from any humane organization known to be present.

He told the officials, veterinarians, and riders that The HSUS could not endorse the race because of the grave potential for abuse and injury to the animals. He was particularly concerned about the lack of organization of the lo-

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gistics staff. There was no adequate communication between officials. Steward learned it would take several hours before a trailer could pick up disabled horses pulled from the race.

Three horses and a mule were pulled from the race on the very first day by the accompanying veterinarians. All animals exhibited lameness except one horse who had a swollen foot.

Steward recommended to the officials that trailers and personnel should be available at each veterinarian checkpoint. He also suggested the race staff travel back and forth over the route. "It is very possible an injured animal could remain between checkpoints for a lengthy time before medical help could arrive."

During one of Steward's unannounced visits to inspect the Great American Horse Race in Kankakee, Ill. on June 28, he was informed the organization had gone broke and was dependent on private support. He feared these financial problems would add to the stress of the animals. However, he was pleased his previous recommendations had been implemented. He found trailers and personnel at the veterinarian checkpoints to immediately load the horses and take them to the camp. He also found numerous vehicles continuously traveling along the race route to watch for injuries or problems along the route.

By the time the race went through Missouri, two participating riders bought out the financially plagued Great American Horse Race Inc. and chose to support the race through to Sacramento. Two veterinarians also left the race in Hannibal, Missouri, and took with them most of the veterinary students and secretarial staff. They have since formed an endurance ride, separate from the Great American Horse Race, to ride to Sacramento.

Steward was very critical of the poor planning of the Great American Horse Race and feared for the animals' well being. While there was no evidence of intentional cruelty and abuse to animals, The HSUS feels the implementation of some of Steward's recommendations and his constant monitoring resulted in better treatment for the horses.

### Local Bicentennial Commission Challenged

Ignoring two warnings from John Dommers, HSUS New England Regional Director, the local Bicentennial Commission of Old Saybrook, Conn., staged a greased pig contest. The contest held for local residents violated two state laws.

The laws forbid the harrassment of animals for amusement and outlaw the presentation of animal prizes. After 40 children in one event and 28 adults in another each chased and piled on a greased twenty pound piglet, the respective winners received the chased pigs as prizes.

Dommers has signed a criminal complaint against the local group and expects it to go to the Circuit Court shortly.

### Wagon Train Slaughter

The Bicentennial Wagon Train Pilgrimage to Pennsylvania which started over a year ago finally ended on July 4 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The end of the pilgrimage signalled a beginning for more exploitation of the animals. Many of the animals were sold at auction to slaughterhouses so their riders could get the money to return home.

Throughout the 17,000 miles covered by 60,000 horsemen and wagoners and 40,000 animals including horses, oxen, mules, ponies, and mini mules, numerous problems existed. HSUS investigator, Philip Steward, inspected the wagon trains several times and discovered no veterinarians had accompanied the wagons and outriders on the trek.

The HSUS Program and Policy Committee sent telegrams to John W. Warner, head of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA) which had given approval to the Pennsylvania Commission and to the Bicentennial Commission of Pennsylvania who in turn had hired the management firm of Aitkin-Kynett Co., Inc. of Philadelphia to produce the event. The telegrams protested the selling of animals used in The Bicentennial Wagon Train Pilgrimage at auction to slaughterhouses for funds to return home. Officials had earlier assured HSUS that each participant would be required to demonstrate financial responsibility as a pre-

requisite to entering the celebration. The telegrams stated: "We urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to take swift and immediate action to prevent any further slaughter and irresponsible behavior by participants."

Disavowing responsibility, The ARBA and the Bicentennial Commission of Pennsylvania felt HSUS had leveled undue criticism and took no further steps to correct the situation. Meanwhile, the Women's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Valley Forge, Penn., purchased 21 mules before they reached the auction block. Berks County Animal Welfare League in Pennsylvania also purchased 6 horses and both The Humane Society of the United States and The American Horse Protection Association have contributed money for the further purchase of additional animals.

HSUS issued a press release immediately condemning the sale of animals. "It is obvious we were misled about the disposition of these horses and mules who have literally worked their hearts out during the past year for this so-called 'historical dream'. These magnificent animals have been exploited and are now destined for the slaughterhouse. This is their thanks for their noble efforts," said John A. Hoyt, President of The Humane Society of the United States.

The Pilgrimage costing \$4 1/2 million was funded by the state of Pennsylvania and major corporations.

