

Show Group Acts to End Abuse To Tennessee Walking Horses

THE American Horse Shows Association, nagged by the problem for years, has started a concerted campaign to wipe out abuses in the Tennessee Walking Horse division.

Officials of the A.H.S.A., accompanied by a veterinarian, descended on the Miami

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Horse Show less than two weeks ago and examined every horse in the division. "We found no techni-

cal rules violations," said Jim Blackwell, executive secretary of the A.H.S.A., who led the expedition. "Several of the nine horses we examined in the two classes had enormous scars that had been cauterized, though.

"They were not bleeding, so under our rules, we could do nothing. However, this is just the opening salvo. We intend to keep after the problem until all cruelty to these horses is wiped out."

Blackwell was obviously disturbed by his findings. He said his trip to Miami was not announced in advance. He was accompanied by Dr. Jordan Woodcock, Katonah, N. Y., veterinarian, who made the examinations.

The Tennessee Walking Horse was developed in the 1800's in Tennessee and other states where large plantations required a horse that could carry owners over long distances. In the show ring, it is shown at a walk, running walk and canter.

In the past, Blackwell said, the A.H.S.A. had discovered instances of corrosive medications on the horse's hooves to produce sores. The purpose is to increase the action in the horse. The horses wear boots and most of the time it is impossible for the judge to see the sores unless the boots are removed.

"This sort of thing is cruel

and inhumane," said Blackwell, "and we intend to stamp it out."

Three weeks ago at the Winter Haven Show—opening event on the Florida Sunshine Circuit—a nail more than two inches long was found in the hoof of a Tennessee Walking Horse.

"How anyone can treat a horse with so little feeling is beyond us," said Blackwell.

Not only have there been corrosives applied to Tennessee Walking Horses, but weighted and chainlined boots also have been discovered. The A.H.S.A. has been fighting the problem since 1959.

In 1960, the rules of the association were strengthened to bar certain medications, provide for mandatory inspection of horses' hooves and specify a modified boot that would prevent concealment of scars.

"The problem is not solved easily," said Albert E. Hart, president of the A.H.S.A. "We have had many people say to us 'why not throw the Tennessee Walking Horse people out of the A.H.S.A. if they persist in such practices?'"

"What would that solve? Then the horses would have no protection at all. Another point that must be kept in mind is that many—probably the majority—of the shows in which the Tennessee Walking Horse participates are not members of the A.H.S.A.

"What we are trying to do is legislate these cruel practices out, and at the same time persuade the Tennessee Walking Horse people that public opinion is against treating the animals the way some of them do.

"But the A.H.S.A. never will just permit the matter to drop."

The National Horse Show, along with many other major shows, refuses to permit Tennessee Walking Horse classes.

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