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## **SHOW Issues One of Longest Suspensions Ever for Tennessee Walking Horse Trainer**

*Joe Cotten Fined and Suspended For 7 ½ Years*

Trainer Joe Cotten has been suspended for 7 ½ years and fined \$5,000 by the SHOW Horse Industry Organization (HIO), subject to upward adjustment depending on the outcome of the Hearing Committee. The suspension is effective immediately, will last until December 21, 2019 and was announced by SHOW President Dr. Stephen L. Mullins.

“This is one of the longest suspensions ever issued to a Tennessee Walking Horse trainer, even longer than what is required by the federal government,” said Mullins. “We take these violations seriously, and we are relieved to put this very troubling incident behind us.”

The penalty stems from Cotten’s action at the Liberty Lions Club Horse Show in Shelbyville, Tenn. on June 15. Cotten is charged with violating Section VI B 3 (a) (b) (c) (k) of the SHOW rulebook. Cotten knowingly filed false entry information while on suspension from one HIO and on probation with another.

In 2010, Cotten was issued a 6 month suspension, 2 year probation and a \$2,500 fine for threatening a judge. The probation was from July 26, 2010 until July 26, 2012, and thus the incident at the Liberty Lions Club Show was a violation of that probation. At the request of his doctor, SHOW waived a portion of the 2010 penalty contingent upon Cotten attending anger management classes and seeking medical help.

Cotten also violated a suspension from the PRIDE HIO for a post-show scar rule violation. His PRIDE suspension ran June 11 through June 24.

At this year's Liberty Lions Club Show, Cotten hired Marvin North, a full time employee of 5-Way Farms, to take his horses through inspection and put them in the ring. Cotten used North's trainer's license number and told North that he would pay any fines the horses received. This is the same violation which caused the indictment of Jackie McConnell and three of his employees.

Cotten entered five horses and falsified all of the entries, which is a violation of the Horse Protection Act. In addition, he was verbally abusive to SHOW officials and sent a vulgar text message to Dr. Mullins later in the show.

Days later, Cotten posted on Facebook graphic pictures of Jose's Wine & Roses, a horse under his care, in which the horse's front feet were badly injured. The Facebook posting has drawn widespread attention on the Internet and unfortunately casts a bad light on the walking horse industry. The owner, Deborah Murphy, has corresponded with Dr. Mullins and denies that the horse was in the condition displayed on Cotten's Face Book page when her husband picked the mare up from Landrum Stables and delivered to Cotten's establishment. It appears that horse may actually have been shaved or clipped. Mr. Murphy picked up the horse immediately and took her to Dr. Brian Wright for treatment. Jose's Wine & Roses has not been shown in 2012 and was shown only once at the 2011 National Futurity.

SHOW also suspended Marvin North for one year, fined him \$1,000 and placed him on 4 year probation subject to upward adjustment depending on the outcome of the Hearing Committee.