

## **SOUND HORSE CONFERENCE 2009 INTRODUCTION:** Lori Northrup

Welcome, and thanks to everyone for taking time from your horses, your jobs, and your lives to be here. We have an outstanding panel of speakers and presentations prepared for you these two days. Many of these conference presentations are going to be technical, serious, and informative. We are professionally taping the entire conference, with the plan to transcribe it into subject documents easily accessible on our web site. We have a marvelous exhibition and dinner planned for you tonight, with over 20 natural, gaited horses performing for you with their dedicated sound owners, and highlighted by the famous natural horsemanship duo of Pat and Linda Parelli with **their** horses.

You have the detailed schedule outlined in your program. And we owe tremendous thanks to our sponsors and volunteers who have worked with me for the past year to bring this Conference together. I'd like to thank all our volunteers, too numerous to list by name, sponsors, highlighted on the inside cover of your program, our panelists and speakers, and our moderators. Please join me in thanking them.

Our goal for this Conference is to reinforce and accelerate the pressures being brought to bear to end the abusive practice of soring. Soring has been called one of the most significant welfare issues affecting any equine breed or discipline by the AAEP. That's the association of 10,000 equine veterinarians in this country. Soring is the intentional infliction of pain, from chemical and mechanical means, to create an exaggerated gait in show horses for the purpose of winning.

There is no one in this room who would argue that soring is acceptable. There is no-one in the entire Tennessee Walking Horse industry who would suggest publically that soring is acceptable. Soring has been federally illegal for almost 40 years.

And it is denied by many in the Tennessee Walking horse industry that soring is still a common practice. Many press releases, articles, and web sites claim that the vast majority of show Tennessee Walking Horses are not sored. Do you believe that? Our first presentation, Current Soring Practices, was developed to help you answer that question.

Let's dedicate this Conference, and focus our combined energies after these two days, to bring an true end to this abuse. Remember why we are doing this: for the horses, those mute, sensitive, affectionate and trusting animals who cannot defend themselves against these tortures.

And now, as we begin the Conference, I will tell you the background of this first presentation. We reached out to 12 people involved with Tennessee Walking Horses and asked for their help in contacting any sources they might know with personal involvement in soring. The basis for this project was complete anonymity.

The only way the people interviewed would agree to speak to us was if a double-blind interview was used. This would ensure that no one recognized their names nor their voices. Each source called into a conference line at their pre-scheduled time, and was questioned by a

prominent attorney who has over 12 years of involvement in Horse Protection Act issues. The conference calls were recorded, and transcribed by a professional service. Interviews were conducted with padded and flat shod show horse owners, a world champion trainer, show judges, show exhibitors, and farriers. And the end of this process, the attorney who conducted the interviews stated, *“The people you identified to have me interview... had terrific knowledge, and although their perspectives on the issue were all somewhat different, it's clear that sorning remains a constant and institutionalized blight on the TWH breed.”*

Each of the sources understood that their call was being recorded, and no sources received any compensation. The transcripts were condensed from 8 hours of interview time into what you are going to hear today and tomorrow, read by professional voices to protect all identities.