

M E M O R A N D U M

From: Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Auditor

Date: May 16, 2008

Re: Horse Summit

Thank you for your interest or participation in the Pierce County Animal Service's first ever "Horse Summit" held on April 15th at the Lodge at Frontier Park in Graham. We had a tremendous turnout of roughly 300 concerned horse owners and other interested parties.

As promised, my staff has transcribed the notes taken on the easel pads (a copy of which is attached) to share the wide variety of ideas, questions, and concerns raised at the meeting with all of you.

Due to overwhelming citizen requests, we are in the process of organizing a second "Horse Summit" to be held in the Gig Harbor / Key Peninsula area within the immediate future. We will distribute information about this upcoming summit as it becomes available.

Please watch our website for updates and feel free to contact my office with questions, comments or concerns.

*If you know others who may be interested in receiving future correspondence of this nature, please forward this to them so they can send us their contact information or, if you wish to be removed from our contact list, please let us know.



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**Pierce County Auditor's Office
Animal Services Division
Graham Horse Summit**

On Tuesday, April 15th, Auditor, Pat McCarthy, Director of Pierce County Animal Services, hosted Pierce County's first ever "Horse Summit". Following is a transcription of the easel notes generated during the discussion groups that night. Due to popular demand, the Auditor is now in the process of organizing a second summit to be held in western Pierce County.

The purpose of the summit was to identify partners and resources to address the problem of a growing population of intentionally or unintentionally under cared for horses, to educate ourselves, and develop constructive tools for the future.

The big question....

How do we as a community protect horses by preventing circumstances where Pierce County Animal Control is forced to become involved?

Question 1 - In our community, what factors are contributing to these circumstances?

A. Economic/Financial Issues

1. Feed cost
2. High cost of fuel
3. Labor Issues
4. Property taxes
5. Higher vet costs
6. Long term/short term poverty

B. Lack of Education

1. First time owners and lack of education
2. Lack of education for first time breeders and horse owners
3. Too many un-started (un-trained/green) horses

C. Cultural – Generational Changes

1. Novelty of owning a horse vs. responsibility of owning a horse
2. Aging demographics
3. Age of owners and ability to care for horses and aging of horse and ability to care for horse
4. Lack of commitment

D. Too Many Breeders and Overpopulation of Horses

1. Lack of responsibility for breeders
2. Horses are living longer
3. No horse shelter facility
4. Animal hoarding/animal collectors
5. “Do gooders”
6. Need for “Low Cost Gelding Act”

E. No Slaughter Houses

1. Cost of disposal and regulations force some horse owners to keep horses that should be put down
2. Horse Slaughter Bill
3. Longer life span of horse due to disposal issue and no slaughter houses
4. Regulations regarding euthanasia
5. Higher vet costs as horses live longer life span
6. Overpopulation of horses
7. No Auction House which means no outlet for aging horses

F. Geographic Issues

1. Zoning Regulations and land use issues
2. Lack of pasture land
3. Over development of land
4. Managing care for horses and property

G. Exportation of Hay

1. Bio-diesel

H. Lack of Coordination Between Organizations

1. No central resources
2. No rescue resources
3. No definition of shelter laws in current state laws
4. Unequal enforcement of animal laws
5. Lack of enforcement of health regulations
6. License for breeders or horse owners

Question 2 - Let's brainstorm some solutions!

A. Affordable Vet Care

1. "Low Cost Gelding Act"
2. Farriers

B. Hay Co-Op

1. Feed vouchers similar to food stamps for feed for the horses
2. More hay land
3. Meet with farm ombudsman to keep costs down for local grown hay and keep local hay here
4. Farm management – community forum

C. Community Outreach

1. Offer help to neighbors – form "neighborhood watch" groups
2. Mentoring program for new horse owners
3. Support network
4. Volunteers – create a database of volunteers
5. Communal horse ownership
6. Equine therapy program for disabled children and elderly people
7. Printed handouts/pamphlets
 - a. Educational guidelines for care
 - b. Education information for horse owners
 - c. Referral resource guide

D. Low Cost Euthanasia/Disposal of Animals

E. Waste Disposal

1. Sell manure to generate funds for horse rescue – "Tagro"
2. Low cost / free waste disposal

F. Legislative Changes

1. Regarding definition and property
2. Cruelty definitions
3. Legislative resources – federal/state/local
4. Legislation for horse slaughter
5. Property tax relief
6. Noxious weed program
7. Zoning laws

G. Rescue Facilities

1. Organizations for horse rescue
 - a. Horse Humane Society
 - b. Foster home funding
2. Create a youth group to rescue horses (4H)

3. Funded rescue facilities
4. Grant writers for small organizations
5. Neglected horse database
6. Performance audits for rescue groups
7. Area boarding

H. Require Breeder Certificate and Breeder License

1. Licensing
2. No individual animal license

I. Animal Control Needs More Power to Take Horses Away

1. Owner accountability
2. Larger fines
3. Communication between law enforcement, Animal Control and Brand Inspectors.
4. Re-instate "Live Stock Advisor" (WSU)

Question 3 - What resources or organizations are you aware of that could help?

A. Non Profit/ Not for Profit Groups

1. WA State Horsemen's Association
2. Back Country Horsemen
3. Pierce County 4H
4. WSU
5. FFA
6. Safe and Forgotten Horses
7. Healthy Horses for Clean Water

B. Local Vets

C. Feed Stores, Farriers and For Profit Organizations

D. Local Legislators – 2nd and 25th Districts

E. County Council

F. Breeder Groups

G. Livestock Advisors

H. Conservation Districts

I. Resource Website

J. Vet Tech Program @ Pierce College

K. Zoos and Game Farms

L. Local and Independent Newspapers

M. Volunteers

N. Horse Mentors

O. State Farm Horse Insurance

P. Pasado's Safe Haven