
Board of Directors
Date March 26, 2025; 7:30pm
ZOOM Meeting

MONTANA QUARTER HORSE ASSOCIATION

Board members present: Tyrell Burkland, Michele Shaw, Lesli Glen, Michele McGuigan, Josh Shengle, Julie Schumacher, Britt Kissock-Robinson, Tracy Tiner

National Directors: Tracy Knudson-Brown, Ruth McDonald-Gates Gary Lynn Olson

Meeting called to order by Board member Cathy Dekker. Julie made a motion to approve the amended February 18, 2025 minutes. Michele S. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Finance: Laura reported financial reports electronically. Britt made a motion to approve the financial report as presented. Second to the motion by Lesli. Motion carried.

Old Business: None.

Committee Reports:

Show Committee: Tyrell is working on the Big Sky Classic concession, cattle are taken care of. Julie is holding a logo contest and has received two logos to date. Discussion regarding having Tim Kamura design a trail pattern again, Tyrell will contact Tim. Laura reported the judges flights are booked, two will be making their own reservations, Judge Briggs flight will be under budget. Lesli suggested partnering with her All Breed Ranch Horse Show to supply Ranch Horse trail obstacles from that show. Lesli also suggested utilizing any donated foliage for the Big Sky Classic as well as the ABRHS. Tyrell will have a Show Committee meeting after AQHA Convention. Tyrell and Laura suggested having a fun team event, which would include a team of 4 “skiing” across the arena.

NILE: Laura reported for Marilyn that to date over \$5,000 in sponsorships have been committed. If all the past sponsors commit, total sponsorships will exceed \$8,000 for the 2025 VRH Show.

Membership Services: Laura reported for Rita Church that to date there are 86 new or renewed members, 4 of those are new MQHA members, 37 Lifetime, two of the lifetime members had their membership cards and Directories returned for undeliverable addresses. And 17 MQHYA members. Follow-up with the welcome member letter. Tabled for April meeting.

Marketing: Julie reported sent in a report to AQHA for advertising the Big Sky Classic. Social media posts for the Amateur & Youth Incentive Fund. Julie has sent out an email to the Marketing Committee for helping at the All-Breed Ranch Horse Show. Britt volunteered to help with the booth at the ABRHS. Julie has the booth. Laura will deliver directories to Julie or Britt for the ABRHS. Julie also talked about the Big Sky Classic logo, she will send them to the Board in April. Julie also has some give away items for the booth.

Amateur: No report.

Youth: Michele gave a verbal summary of the MQHYA Proposed Guidelines that were edited and approved by the youth at their last meeting. Laura shared the entire document. The board shared no questions or concerns. Michele also mentioned that Sidney McCasland expressed interest in being an advisor next year.

Breeders/Ranch: Lesli reported she is making a list of Breeders for working on the podcast. After Convention, Lesli will have a Committee meeting. Lesli would like to work with the MQHA Hall of Fame Committee to offer more incentive to the Breeders.

By-Laws: No report.

Legislative: Britt reported she emailed a full report to Laura for Board distribution. Summary includes: the Horse Protection Act requiring event managers has been postponed until February 2026. A full legislative report which has been forwarded onto the Board and an addendum to these minutes. Julie reported Ward at AQHA is hiring a lobbyist for the HPA to get better clarification about this legislation.

Recreational Riding: Julie reported there will be a Poker Ride at the 406 Arena. After the Ride, participants could possibly work on the outdoor trail course. Julie would like the Board to consider having MQHA pay for the participants trail course fees. Julie will contact Jessica Fryberger to see if the 406 would agree to a flat fee for the course rides. Dates include May, more probably will be a Sunday in August.

Region 2: Tracy reported the Region 2 is looking to have a special Commemorative buckle designed for the 20th Anniversary. Working on door prizes and also have AQHA be present at the event.

2025 Convention: No new report on the Convention.

Hall of Fame: Ruth reported she will be contacting several past members to find Hall of Fame honorees. Laura reported the HOF forms have also been posted on the website. Ruth will contact Ryan Jaeger about helping with getting HOF participants.

New Business: Laura reported that Nancy Weaver suggested MQHA Board members attending the AQHA Convention also participate in the AIM meeting for AQHA Affiliates. Laura reported Britt has completed the Spring ENewsletter which will be delivered to members on the following day. Suggestion sending the newsletter to sponsors in order to have them send onto their email recipients. Laura will contact any sponsors with email addresses and make this suggestion. Josh suggested contacting AQHA for more member email addresses. Tracy B. indicated that AQHA will do an email blast; she will follow up with AQHA at Convention.

Correspondence: No correspondence received.

All agenda items have been satisfied. Britt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second to the motion by Michele S. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Bakker

Next meeting – April 16, 2025 – Zoom Meeting 7:30 pm

AMENDMENT – LEGISLATIVE REPORT submitted via email

CONCERNING HORSES

THE HORSE PROTECTION ACT

March 20: USDA APHIS has postponed Horse Protection Inspectors training and Event Manager Responsibilities until February 1, 2026. Public Comment period is open for 60 days starting March 20. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/hpa>.

March 10: Tennessee Walking Horse (HPA) Lawsuit Decided. The recent summary judgment in the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration Association v. USDA case has struck a significant blow against regulatory overreach in the equine industry. The ruling found that several provisions of the USDA's 2024 amended Horse Protection Act (HPA) rules exceeded statutory authority and violated due process. Specifically, the U.S. District Court ruled that the USDA's ban on action devices, pads, and substances exceeded statutory authority. Additionally, the court struck down the USDA's replacement of the Scar Rule with the ambiguous Dermatologic Conditions Indicative of Soring (DCIS) provision, which lacked due process safeguards. While this is a victory, the battle is far from over. Under the revised HPA, all breeds and disciplines would be subject to inspections, impoundment, and government recordkeeping requirements. The USDA's authority *extends to private property*, meaning inspectors could search trailers, tack rooms, and other personal property without proper cause. <https://www.westernjustice.info/post/federal-overreach-and-the-future-of-horse-shows-why-the-horse-protection-act-must-be-reformed>

March 10: USDA APHIS Veterinarian Under Congressional Investigation Over Horse Protection Act Rulemaking. The USDA is being investigated, and criminal charges are being levied. It has been revealed through court documents and by the House Oversight Committee that the HPA published in May and opened for public comment is entirely different than the version that is now in play. In an ongoing lawsuit Wright v. USDA, the DOJ verified in their Motion to Dismiss that the USDA's APHIS *considers injury to a horse while it is being ridden an act of 'soring'*. The source is Dr. Aaron Rhyner, APHIS's Associate Director for Animal Care. The verification provided by the DOJ confirms that Dr. Rhyner's personal opinion has now been turned into APHIS policy. Additionally, APHIS failed to follow the laws requiring a robust and thorough analysis of the impacts of this rule on small businesses across the country. <https://www.westernjustice.info/post/usda-aphis-veterinarian-under-congressional-investigation-over-horse-protection-act-rulemaking>

March 4: American Horse Council submits formal request to USDA on Horse Protection Act regulations. Since the Final Rule was published, AHC and many members of the horse industry have requested clarifications on the interpretation of the regulation including a perceived "mission creep" of applying the definition of soring beyond what was intended by Congress. For example, did Congress intend to ban the use of fly spray? (Not likely). AHC is troubled by the adoption of internal USDA policies and protocols without stakeholder input for functionality, resulting in vague policies that are rife with inconsistent applications. AHC has submitted another formal request to the USDA developed by 25

stakeholders from various breeds and disciplines.

<https://horsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/AHC-submits-another-formal-request-to-USDA-on-HPA-regulations.pdf>

February 27: H.R.1675 - To amend the Horse Protection Act to provide increased protection for horses participating in shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions, and for other purposes. On February 27, HR 1675 was introduced in the House, then referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1675/all-actions?overview=closed#tabs>

February 27: H.R.1684 - To amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes. Introduced to the House by Brian Fitzpatrick and referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1684>

RE HORSE SLAUGHTER

February 27: S.775 - A bill to amend the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 to prohibit the slaughter of equines for human consumption. This bill was introduced to the Senate by Lindsay Graham, read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/775>

February 27: H.R.1661 - To amend the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 to prohibit the slaughter of equines for human consumption. This bill was introduced to the House by Vern Buchanan and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1661>

February 27: Introduced by Jan Schakowsky and Vern Buchanan this legislation would permanently ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption, the **Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act**. The bill would also prohibit the export of live horses to Mexican and Canadian slaughterhouses to be sold overseas. Companion legislation is being introduced in the Senate by Ben Ray Lujan and Lindsey Graham. The lawmakers hope to include the *SAFE Act* as part of **the 2025 Farm Bill** when it is considered by Congress later this year.

<https://schakowsky.house.gov/media/press-releases/schakowsky-buchanan-lead-legislation-ban-horse-slaughter>

CONCERNING PENDING BILLS IN THE MT LEGISLATURE

The following Agriculture, Livestock, Taxation bills have been introduced; status as of March 10, below.

- **HB6: Renewable Resource Grants** – Sponsored by John Fitzpatrick, (H) 2nd Reading Pass Consideration 2/28/25.
- **HB 20: Require voted levies to be in dollars rather than mills**– Sponsored by Jaret Coles, (S) Third reading passed 34-16; (S) Returned to House with Amendments 2/27/25..
- **HB27: Remove Automatic Agricultural Classification for Certain Parcels** – Sponsored by Sherry Essmann, (H) Revised Fiscal Note Printed, 2/24/25.

- **HB80: Provide Cash Lease-only Bidding for Agriculture Leases** – Sponsored by Randyn Gregg, ((S) Third Reading Concurred, 47-3, 3/04/25; (H) Returned from Enrolling, 3/07/25.
- **HB108: Eliminate Reference to Personal Property Farm Manual for Property Tax Purposes** – Sponsored by Eric Tilleman, (H) Third Reading Passed 100-0; (S) Hearing (S) Taxation 2/21/25.
- **HB 119: Establish the Montana Cattle Committee** –Sponsored by Brandon Ler, (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 52-47, 2/06/25; (S) Hearing (S) Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 2/27/25. (See opinion piece below)
- **HB 171: Eliminate Montana Alfalfa Seed Committee** – Sponsored by Eric Tilleman, (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 97-2, 1/28/25; (S) Hearing (S) Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 2/05/25.
- **HB 212: Limit Liability of Agricultural Vehicles** – Sponsored by Ed Byrne, (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 51-47, 3/05/25; (S) Referred to Committee (S) Highways and Transportation, 3/06/25.
- **HB269: Eliminate the Organic Commodity Advisory Council** – Sponsored by Eric Tilleman, (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 96-3; (S) Hearing (S) Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 2/19/25.
- **HB 356: Allow livestock loss reimbursement for black bear predation** – Sponsored by Eric Tilleman; (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 94-6, (S) Hearing (S) Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 2/19/25.
- **HB390: Provide for Montana right to repair agricultural equipment act** – Sponsored by Paul Tuss, (H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal, 3/12/25.
- **HB 401: Prohibit the sale of lab-grown meat in the state of Montana** – Sponsored by Braxton Mitchell; (H) 3rd Reading Passed, 64-35; (S) Referred to Committee (S) Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 3/06/25.
- **SB4: Revise Taxation of Homesite on Certain Agricultural Property** – Sponsored by Becky Beard, (S) Tabled in Committee, 8-0, 2/13/25.
- **SB78: Revise Laws Related to Marking Hides and Meat** – Sponsored by Josh Kassmier, (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 48-2; (H) First Reading, 2/19/25.
- **SB79: Repeal Laws Related to Inspection of Animals in Feedlots** – Sponsored by Josh Kassmier, (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 47-2, 2/10/25; (H) Hearing (H) Agriculture, 2/11/25.
- **SB 80: Allow for digital copies of required documentation for transport of livestock** – Sponsored by Josh Kassmier; (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 48-0, 2/10/25; (H) Hearing (H) Agriculture, 2/11/25.

- **SB96: Establish Working Animal Protection Act** – Sponsored by John Fuller, Introduced 1/06/25. (*This bill adds a new section stating, “The right to utilize a working animal for the benefit and welfare of the working animal or the individual the working animal serves is guaranteed.”*); (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 40-10, 1/31/25; (H) Hearing (H) Local Government, 3/07/25. Pending House Local Government Committee; Hearing 3/18/25.
- **SB99: Revise Unrelated Business Taxable Income to Include Certain Rental and Accommodations Income** – Sponsored by Becky Beard, (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 27-23; (H) Tabled in Committee (H) Taxation, 2/18/25.
- **SB 101: Revise laws related to squatting** – Sponsored by Becky Beard; (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 35-14; (H) Hearing, 2/03/25.
- **SB155: Create Food Safety Panel** – Sponsored by Daniel Emrich, (H) Tabled in Committee (S) Committee Executive Action--Bill Not Passed, 3-8, (S) Public Health, Welfare and Safety, 2/05/25.
- **SB161: Provide for Regulation and Sale of Aquaculture** – Sponsored by Greg Hertz, (S) 3rd Reading Passed, 47-3; (S) Fiscal Note Printed, 2/25/25.

OPINION

by Charley Yeager, Choteau, MT

“This is serious! HB0119 is an additional beef check off bill that has passed in the House. This new legislation proposes another \$1.00 tax for every head of cattle we own, and it’ll be managed by the Montana Department of Livestock (MDL). Here’s what you need to know:

1. *****Cost to Us****: The MDL plans to take around \$190,000 each year just for their overhead costs. That’s money that could be used for better things!*
2. *****Free Labor****: They’ll use brand inspectors and livestock market staff for free, but we’re still stuck paying this tax.*
3. *****Refunds****: They expect only a small number of us—around 200—to ask for refunds each year. That doesn’t seem right.*
4. *****More Government Control****: This bill gives the government more control over our ranching lives, and that’s a big concern.*

If you don’t like this \$1.00 tax, now’s the time to speak up! Contact your Montana Senators because the bill is already in the Senate. You can find their info on the Montana Cattlemen’s Association website. Go to montanacattlemensassociation.org and clicking on the Fiscal Note 2027 Biennium link.”

The full amended text of HB119 can be found at: <https://legiscan.com/MT/text/HB119/2025>

CONCERNING AGRICULTURE

February 18: In December of 2017, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act doubled the exemption from the estate tax to \$10 million for individuals and \$20 million for families. U.S. Senator Steve Daines joined Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) and 44 Senate colleagues in reintroducing the “Death Tax Repeal Act.” The bill would permanently repeal the federal estate tax. The bill is supported by more than 190 members of the Family Business Coalition and more than 105 members of the Family Business Estate Tax Coalition. <https://www.daines.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MCG25006-1.pdf>

January 28: H.R.774 - PASTURES Act (aka “Protecting Agricultural Spaces Through Effective Ranching Strategies Act”). To limit the ability of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to penalize an owner of livestock for grazing by such livestock on certain Federal lands on which grazing is permitted on or after the date of enactment of this Act and subsequently prohibited, and for other purposes. Ms. Hageman introduced the bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and to the Committee on Agriculture. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/774>

PRIVATE PROPERTY/WATER RIGHTS

January 24: H.R.726 - Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement Amendments Act of 2025. Introduced by Troy Downing, this bill amends the Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2010 to make improvements to that Act, and for other purposes. Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/726>

January 23: H.R.716 - Fill the Lake Act. Introduced by Ryan Zinke, this bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to ensure full pool levels of Flathead Lake in Montana in accordance with certain requirements, and for other purposes. Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/716>

MISCELLANEOUS

LOW & SLOW HELICOPTERS FLYING IN MT

Don't be alarmed if you hear the thundering thump-thump-thump of a low-flying helicopter near your property over the next two months. Northwest Energy is conducting aerial inspections of its power lines across the state from **March 3 to April 18**, and they're using helicopters to get a closer look. The helicopters are manned by an operations supervisor and vegetation management coordinator who carefully scan the transmission lines to look for faulty or damaged equipment that may need repairs. https://catcountry1029.com/helicopter-power-line-inspections-across-montana-in-march-and-april/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral

March 4: THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK ASKS MONTANANS TO BE AWARE OF AVIAN INFLUENZA The DOL is asking Montana poultry and dairy owners to be aware of the risk of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) as the spring waterfowl migration gets underway. The virus continues to remain active across the country with 25 new detections in poultry flocks in 12 states over the previous 7-day reporting period. Additionally, a Canada goose was confirmed infected in Gallatin County on February 26. HPAI is a potentially zoonotic disease with 70 human cases reported nationally associated with this outbreak.

January 23: H.R. 718 Public Lands in Public Hands Act. Introduced by Ryan Zinke, this bill prohibits the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from transferring certain Federal land, and for other purposes. Referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/718>

FROM GOVERNOR GIANFORTE'S OFFICE

March 13: The Department of the Interior (DOI) approved the expansion of the Spring Creek Mine in Big Horn County. The decision extends the mine's operational life by 16 years, enabling the production of 39.9 million tons of federal coal and supporting nearly 300 full-time jobs.

<https://news.mt.gov/Governors-Office/Governor-Gianforte-Praises-President-Trump-Secretary-Burgum-for-Supporting-Montana-Mining>

February 27: The Homestead Rate Cut is a recommendation that came from the governor's Property Tax Task Force. The Homestead Rate Cut is projected to lower property taxes for Montana homeowners by 15% and small businesses by 18%. According to estimates, the property tax reform measure will directly reduce property taxes for more than 215,000 primary residences and more than 32,000 small businesses, as well as provide indirect relief for over 130,000 renters. The House of Representatives voted 68-30 to pass HB 231, the Homestead Rate Cut, with Republicans voting 43-14 and Democrats voting 25-16.

<https://news.mt.gov/Governors-Office/Governor-Gianforte-Statement-on-House-Passage-of-Permanent-Property-Tax-Cut>

FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL KNUDSEN'S OFFICE

March 6: Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen led a coalition of 21 attorneys general urging Congressional leadership to pass the **"No DeepSeek on Government Devices Act,"** which will prohibit government devices from downloading and using the Chinese Communist Party's DeepSeek artificial intelligence software. The letter outlined the threat that DeepSeek poses to the United States. The platform has the capability to send user data directly to the CCP, users may unknowingly be creating accounts in China, and their identities and online behavior would be visible to the Chinese government. DeepSeek has already been blocked on government devices in **Canada, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan.**

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/MTAG/2025/03/06/file_attachments/3184952/DeepSeek%20Letter%20to%20Congress_FINAL.pdf

February 20: Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen announced an immigration enforcement agreement with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The agreement will authorize Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) troopers and Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) agents to arrest illegal aliens in Montana and work together with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to deport them. Following ICE training, some MHP troopers and DCI agents will have the authority to enforce certain immigration laws. The agreement was reached under section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

<https://dojmt.gov/attorney-general-knudsen-signs-agreement-with-trump-administration-to-aid-in-immigration-enforcement-and-deportation-efforts/>

FROM SENATOR STEVE DAINES OFFICE

February 26: *“Jamieson Greer will be a strong voice for Montana ag and trade and will ensure that, under President Trump, Montana farmers, ranchers and small business owners can compete on a fair playing field in important markets around the world.”*

February 11: Senator Daines wrote a letter to the Montana legislature expressing strong support for establishing American Rodeo as Montana's official state sport to recognize the cultural and historical significance that American Rodeo has for Montanans.