



May 12, 2020

Member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Subject: Urgent Federal Support Needed for Canada's Working Horses

Dear Members,

Due to COVID-19, equestrian farms across Canada are currently facing unprecedented financial instability. Since all public-facing equine activities have stopped, many of our members are unable to pay for animal care as their incomes have largely disappeared. Estimates, based on our recent national survey, indicate there are 46,501 horses and 8,455 equine facilities with less than one month of financial reserves and supplies. Without urgent government support, many of our members are facing the horrendous, and imminent, decision to cull or euthanize perfectly healthy, capable animals.

We have been lobbying the federal government for support in the form of an emergency relief fund for several weeks, however to date there has been no response. Equine Canada is the national governing body representing, advancing, and advocating on behalf of approximately 26,500 Active Equine Facilities and approximately 145,500 Active Equines (working horses) that are agricultural in nature. Our members include agricultural businesses that use land, purpose-built structures and have working horses to generate revenue. Services typically include breeding, raising, training, boarding, and maintaining the health and welfare of the animals. These activities support regional economic development and awareness of local *secondary equine activities* such as sport and competition, youth and adult development and wellness, therapeutic riding programs, and agri-tourism.

Working horses are valuable, useable and respected farm assets that require daily care and upkeep, including feeding, cleaning, movement, and social connection. This level of nurturing requires the services of animal care professionals (veterinarians and farriers) and regular agricultural inputs (hay, bedding and grains). All of these necessities become cost-prohibitive without sufficient income.

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Our country's equine community desperately needs help to ensure the ongoing viability of an increasing number of Canada's Active Equine Facilities, and the well-being of their working horses. We are doing what we can privately to raise money for those businesses in greatest need but the industry as a whole risks permanent damage without much needed government support.

Horses have always served Canadians. The pandemic has changed everything, but the loss of a single horse due to the financial inability to feed it would be a national travesty and need not happen.

We truly hope we can count on you as a member of the AGRI Committee to raise this important issue, and help ensure the health of Canadian equine operations, the staff they employ, and ultimately the horses they own.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

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