



## CHECKS AND BALANCES IN THE EQUINE RANCHING INDUSTRY ENSURE HIGH QUALITY CARE FOR HORSES

The equine ranching industry has more checks and balances to ensure animal care and welfare than any other livestock sector, making it one of the most regulated and closely inspected equine-related activities in the world. The checks and balances system is described below:

### Care and Handling of Horses

- Equine ranchers engaged in the collection of pregnant mares' urine (PMU) are contractually obligated to adhere to the *"Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Horses on PMU Ranches."* The *Code* was developed in 1990 to codify previously adopted ranching practices, thus ensuring high standards of care for horses involved in equine ranching. Company inspectors, agriculture/equine specialists and veterinarians all refer to the *Code's* guidelines when inspecting or observing equine ranches.

### Inspections

- PMU ranches have undergone many state and provincial reviews conducted by animal welfare groups and individuals representing these groups. The Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust; the United States Department of Agriculture; the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP); Nat T. Messer IV, D.V.M., chairman of the AAEP Equine Welfare Committee; Art King, D.V.M., president of the Ontario Equestrian Federation and past chairman of the Canadian Equestrian Federation's Ethics and Equine Welfare Committee; and Colin A. Roberts, B.V.Sc., Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Centre for Equine Studies at the U.K. Animal Health Trust and Senior Veterinary Advisor to the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH) found PMU horses to be healthy and well cared for. For example:
  - ***"I feel this industry does represent a responsible use of horses and that using horses to produce a commodity for the benefit of mankind is appropriate, as long as the horses receive the type of humane care they do on these farms."*** -- Nat Messer IV, D.V.M., chairman of the AAEP Equine Welfare Committee, 1997 AAEP Report.
  - ***"The general standard of care and welfare of the PMU horses compared favorably with those in other segments of the horse industry. Many examples of much care and compassion were observed."*** -- The Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust, May 1995.
- An international team of equine experts, comprised of veterinary representatives from the AAEP, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the ILPH inspected PMU ranches during the 1996-97 collection season to observe the health and welfare of the horses. The team concluded:
  - ***"The ranchers took pride in their animals, and Pfizer (the pharmaceutical company who purchases PMU to use in a hormone replacement medication) showed a commitment to continuing to improve the standards of equine welfare on the farms. Based on our inspections, the allegations of inhumane treatment of horses involved in PMU ranching are unfounded."***

## **Inspection and Review Schedules**

- Qualified company inspectors visit each ranch on a monthly basis, throughout the entire year check conformance with the guidelines in the Code.
- Each equine ranch is reviewed by independent, practicing veterinarians or qualified company inspectors a minimum of 14 times per year. After each visit, veterinarians and inspectors submit formal reviews of their findings to the company.
- Provincial and state veterinarians have the authority to inspect PMU ranches at their own discretion.

## **Veterinary Care**

- Contracts with the ranchers require two herd health reviews per collection season. Thus, veterinary care on equine ranches exceeds the norm for the U.S. “household-owned” horse population, as reported by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Center for Information Management in their 2012 report. In contrast to the fact that 100 percent of equine ranches are reviewed by a veterinarian at least two times during the course of a year, the AVMA reported that more than 46 percent of U.S. “household-owned” horses did not receive a visit from a veterinarian.
- A herd health review program was developed in conjunction with a committee of 11 individuals; eight of those being equine veterinarians officially appointed by the Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan veterinary medical associations and the North Dakota Board of Animal Health. These individuals included:
  - Roxy Bell, D.V.M. & Darrel Dalton, D.V.M., Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
  - Sidney Griffin, D.V.M. & Wayne Dunnigan, D.V.M., Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Assoc.
  - Allan Preston, D.V.M. & Jayme Harvey-Micay, D.V.M. — Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association.
  - Larry Schuler, D.V.M. and Judith Gibbens, D.V.M.—North Dakota Board of Animal Health
  - The remaining committee members included:
    - Nadia Cymbaluk, M.S., D.V.M., Managing Veterinarian, Linwood Equine Ranch (Retired);
    - Ross Chambers, Field Supervisor (Retired), Ayerst Organics
    - Norman K. Luba, Executive Director, North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC).
- There are 29 veterinarians certified to conduct herd health review program. After reviewing the ranches their reports are filed and compared with company inspection results.

## **Contract Approval**

- All PMU ranches contract independently with Pfizer to provide pregnant mares’ urine, used in the production of an estrogen replacement medication. Before receiving a contract, all ranching facilities must be examined and approved by company inspectors.

## **NAERIC**

- The North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC) is a nonprofit association of equine ranchers engaged in horse production and management of pregnant mares. Estrogens extracted from pregnant mares’ urine (PMU) are used in the production of a hormone replacement therapy for menopausal women. NAERIC serves its members, the horse industry and general public as an agribusiness resource by providing the latest information and research on ranch management, equine care, breeding practices and innovative marketing programs. The council is dedicated to ensuring the NAERIC brand represents overall quality. NAERIC supports and promotes the partnership between agriculture and women’s health care.