



The magazine of the New York State Humane Association

Major Setback for Animal Welfare

When we first thought about this incident, we were excited about the changes to the Ringling Brothers Circus, not only that the elephants were being declassified, but also that the circus itself was closing – apparently people were learning about the cruelty inherent in using animals for entertainment. It will hopefully open doors to help other venues that abusing animals in similar situations.

Much of what we learn about what happens behind the scenes regarding animals is due to releases of information from a critical USDA website, but that knowledge changed recently. As we want to press, it was well overlapping ours.

For years, organizations (including us) pressed animals have been to various animal care industries have been able to rely on investigations from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA is involved with enforcing over the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act and Horse Protection Act, and it has done so by investigating animal facilities. The same process have asked us USDA reports to assess adequate health, safety and humane treatment of program and horses obtained from their records, while some research labs, clinics, and university labs used their reports to claim adherence to animal welfare regulations. On February 3, the USDA abruptly reversed all such reports from its website, allowing groups like the American People with Disabilities and animal welfare news, and animal welfare records lab to operate in comparative safety.

The animal care industry is surprised to suddenly against the USDA by releases of records, especially by proponents of horse racing where horse (American Walking Horse) are "sworn" to "high jump" by applying records themselves to their top and using other flight card procedures, creating them to fill their top high to make it so to maintain the pace. The competing American Horse Association had ignored the rules to prevent this using practices. But the racing administration got their higher rules on hold, allowing this conveniently avoid practice to continue. The motivation for the removal of these reports was to prevent individual parties. There are the ones who reports and records that many groups relied upon to pressure the welfare of animals. The agency's decision has not been criticized by some of the regulated industries, who welcome the public's view through their transparency and their records.

The USDA asserts that such records and reports will still be available through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), but FOIA requests can take weeks or months, even years, to obtain the same information.



Example of horse who was trained to "high jump" using the information being given, being treated the conventional definition of pain as a threat to or harm to self or to the horse or to another animal, regardless of the

information that used to be available publicly. Moreover, the USDA has given FOIA exemptions, such as 95 and 97 that allow the retention of information that "will reasonably be expected to constitute an invasion of personal privacy." Investigations that used health paper will conditions against laboratory animal abuse, farm animal cruelty, and horse racing could possibly be used to be invasion of privacy by the donors who were in some way their usual business practices. Apparently, making sure that a historical donor's privacy rights were thought not into the open for protection is more important than the rights of millions of animals to humane treatment.

It is possible that the USDA will reverse its past decision to release these valuable reports to requests to public pressure. Even several Congressmen have expressed opposition to what the USDA has done. The WELS has notified the USDA that regarding the reports and records releases as second treated in 2005, and this could give rise to a lawsuit against the USDA decision, hopefully with many other animal welfare groups joining us. Animals deserve and need this strength. Ask us if it.