



Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition
19025 Coates Blvd.
Hastings, MN 55033
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Re: In Support of Office of Animal Protection bill (H.F. 3799 Norris)

Chair Moller and members of the Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee:

The Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition (MHWC) is an organization created to benefit horses in need. We are a group of organizations, attorneys, horse rescues, humane agents and individuals working to prevent equine neglect, abandonment and abuse. We do this by providing resources to law enforcement, supporting criminal prosecutions of horse crimes, assisting with temporary foster care, veterinary assistance and euthanasia.

We are experienced experts in horse welfare and equine issues. As such, we are writing to support the bill to create an Office of Animal Protection (OAP) under the Department of Public Safety (H.F. 3799 Norris).

As an organization that works with law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in all jurisdictions, we have observed many inconsistencies in the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. The lack of training, resources and support available for law enforcement agencies and county attorneys has resulted in erratic and ineffectual enforcement of horse welfare cases.

Our coalition has observed cases of horse abuse and neglect throughout all counties in MN. Neglect - the most common form of equine abuse - is difficult to investigate. Horse cases are complex and unique. In many cases, law enforcement officers and prosecutors are not cognizant of the animal husbandry skills necessary to maintain a healthy horse. As a result, horses may be left to languish in extreme suffering and neglect, resulting in criminal animal cruelty and some cases, death.

MHWC supports the establishment of an OAP to provide expertise and assistance with horse welfare cases and animal cruelty laws. OAP would establish standards and cross-training for authorities regarding the enforcement of animal cruelty laws in their communities. OAP would lead in the reform of the current system, which is long over-due, resulting in more effective and productive legal enforcement of horse cases and animal welfare cases.

Thank you for your consideration of the OAP bill, taking steps toward greater protections for Minnesota animals.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition