



VERMONT HORSE COUNCIL

"Creating a unified equine voice"

www.vthorsecouncil.org

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Heidi Krantz, President

The Vermont Horse Council is a membership based "for cause" organization with 501c3 status. Our membership is 200 with an increasing number of business memberships. Our membership includes individual horse owners, rescue facilities that feed and house 20 + animals, breeding and training businesses, therapeutic centers, and boarding/lesson facilities. While many are not considered farms, they all contribute to the agricultural economy, support several state-wide initiatives by keeping working lands in Vermont open as pasture and hay, providing jobs (especially for young people) and tourism opportunities.

For example, on my property, a former dairy farm in Craftsbury, I house 3 horses, and raise hay for my horses in addition to providing feed/haylage for a neighboring dairy farm.

Here are some of the issues concerning to our members and equine-based businesses:

1. Definitions - There is a need for clarity and consistency in how equine-based businesses fit the definition of agriculture. The current inclusion of horses as livestock is critical. Many owners and businesses will be impacted by the RAP's. However, they may not be classified as agriculture for issues such as worker's compensation, insurance and taxation.
2. RAP's - The Council understands the challenges facing the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to develop and implement this new law, but the equine community has been largely overlooked in the development and outreach about this law. Many equine businesses remain unaware of the law and its requirements.
3. Communication - We admit that the equine industry is not as unified as other agricultural segments, and the VHC is working to improve that. We have not had a strong connection with state agencies and are working to strengthen those relationships - but we need an open door and to be welcomed as partners - if we are expected to meet regulatory standards, we should expect opportunities for input and support.
4. Finally, the economic impact of equine-based business is not documented in this state. No data exists about how many horses, how many farms, how many acres of

pasture and hay remain open, how many jobs, how much feed, etc. is generated by equine-based businesses in Vermont. We had an opportunity to participate in an economic impact study this year, but could not raise the funds necessary to move forward - while individuals, organizations such as the Farm Bureau and businesses pledged funds, we received no financial support from any state agencies.

We appreciate this opportunity to share information with you about the equine industry, and are hopeful that we can continue the conversation to gain more support for this growing sector of the agricultural economy.

I can be reached at vthorsecouncil@gmail.com or at 802-586-7559 if you would like to contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

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President