

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Mike Boyle/ President/NRHA

FROM: Rick Ramsey/ NRHA Member #116

DATE: August 8, 2007

SUBJECT: NRHA Proposed Rule Changes

It is with remorse that I find myself writing this letter to you. I have been a Life Member of NRHA since 1978 and an annual member for many years prior to that. I have seen many changes in our sport over that time span as you would expect. These changes have, for the most part, been a positive affect on our members and events. But that period seems to be behind us and we are now in a period of discourse and decline. Let me explain my position.

During the past few years it seems that the emphasis of our organization was directed at international reining. In some ways it has had a positive affect on our sport but along with that came a big downside for NRHA. The stewardship of our organization has had such "tunnel vision" in regards to international reining that it has, for the most part, ignored our domestic events and placed them on "cruise control". The mind set was probably that we were so strong domestically that that process would work. I am here to tell you that they could not have been more wrong.

I am a charter member of the Ohio Valley Reining Horse Assn and I consider us to be one of the strongest affiliates of the NRHA and I know we are one of the oldest. During the past few years we have seen a drastic decline in our entries and financial status due to the decrease in interest of showing reining horses. People are finding alternative events to show their horse in such as Reined Cow Horse, Ranch Horse events, etc. This is due in part to the expense of showing NRHA. The average working family that makes between \$50,000.00 and \$75,000.00 per year has trouble affording our event. When you look at prices of \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 to get an entry level horse for a newcomer it just gets out of hand and therefore hard to attract new interest to our sport.

During our Town Talk meeting in Lexington, Kentucky Frank Costantini, in support of international reining, asked us to all look at the prices that our horses are selling for now as opposed to several years ago. There is little doubt that this statement is true and you can rest assured that it is good for the professional horseman who makes their living by being in the horse business. However, anyone who does not realize that NRHA is a Non-Pro driven horse business has totally missed the foundation of our organization, the Non-Professional. They are the people who buy the horses and who pay the trainers to train and show them. I don't see too many horses owned by Todd Bergen being shown by Shawn Florida. The point that I make here is that our horses are so expensive at this point that we have reduced the number of people who can enter our sport. I hear of three year olds that are selling for \$250,000.00. How much higher can we want these prices to go? How much longer will it be before our membership goes from 14,000 down to

5,000. And to finish my point, we have been told that Reining is really “hot” internationally. With a world population in the billions, I do not find 4,000 foreign members as a qualification for a “hot” international sport. After all, during the Lexington, Kentucky show in June there was a \$25,000.00 FEI event and only six(6) reiners entered and showed.

The officers of NRHA must now take the time to reexamine their priorities and concentrate their efforts toward our US reining events. For too long these events have been neglected and this borders on financial irresponsibility by our elected stewards. When we continue to hold events such as the NRHA Convention which lost nearly \$100,000.00; the NRHA Derby which historically loses \$200,000.00 plus and an FEI Masters which loses \$75,000.00 plus, it would appear that there are serious issues to tend to domestically and that the officers should feel an obligation to the membership they represent to cure these problems. From my seat, it appears that we have people managing programs who come late to the table and have little knowledge to share with the problem. Anne-Marie Burns is a disgrace as head of the finance committee. How anyone can continue in her position with the losses NRHA is sustaining is beyond me. Her resignation as head of this committee should be demanded by the membership, however with this failing we can probably accomplish this task during the upcoming election of officers. The \$800,000 net worth of NRHA is going to be a declining figures if this is not corrected.

With all of the above being said, let me move to my main reason for this letter. Steve Harris has made a proposal for a new Medication Policy to be adopted by NRHA. The only support that I have encountered for this new rule change has been from the officers and board members of NRHA. In going on line and looking at the feedback from the membership, the opposition to it is running between 85-90% consistently. As you are aware Michelle Flarida has composed a letter of opposition to this rule change and it is being signed by hundreds of members. In talking with Shawn yesterday, he told me that in addition to himself, such trainers as Andrea Fappani, Todd Bergen, Brian Bell, Mike McEntire, Steve Schwartzenberger, Clint Haverty etc have signed on in support of her position. These are some “heavy hitters” in our sport and represent many major wins and millions of dollars in earning. It would appear to me that we should listen to our top professionals when considering such a rule change. Also, I have been told that the Professionals Committee is in support of the Med Policy, however I am also told by members of this group that this is by and large Jeff Petska’s support of the NRHA board’s position. In trying to head off a confrontation, I contacted Kim Sloan and asked him to talk with Mr. Harris and ask him to withdraw this proposal until all of the questions and unsolved problem areas surrounding the proposal can be resolved. Somewhere around a week after my conversation with Kim he called me back and told me that Steve was not sure that he wanted to withdraw the proposal. This came as no surprise to me due to the fact the during a conversation which Mr. Harris had with Michelle Flarida he told her that NRHA was getting a “lot of pressure” to make sure this rule change was adopted. The question keeps coming up as to where this pressure is coming from and no one at NRHA has ever supplied an answer. Now in reflecting on this issue it begs the question as to what promises our Elected Board has made to someone or some organization as to NRHA establishing a Medication Policy. Is this another area in which the Elected Board has acted without consideration of the feelings of

the general membership? It goes back to my earlier statement that there is very little “history” on our board. In reviewing our current list of officers and board members, very few know where we came from and what were all about. Most come from other backgrounds such as AQHA and don’t understand that, in my opinion, the failed policies of AQHA drove many of us to NRHA where horsemen with a common sense approach were in control and that has made us the envy of all other horse organizations. However, that is no longer the fact as I see the AQHA mentality now in control of NRHA and that is what I ran away from 30 plus years ago. In short, the proposed “Med Policy” is as ill conceived as the “Strategic Plan” which was offered up last March and was “crushed” by the membership at the NRHA Town Talk meetings.

Most of our membership has lost confidence in our board and by in large have little trust in their ability to represent them. Everyone is aware that there are hidden agendas by the “Elected Board” which are not presented to the general membership. We are told at times that “the Elected Board knows better than the membership what is good for our organization”. With this being apparent, it would appear that the board will probably try and pass the “Med Policy” in total disregard to the wishes of the membership. I think it only fair to make you aware of the position that myself and several other longtime members are taking concerning this situation. We are in total opposition to this policy and will work to elect representation for our position and after this has been accomplished we will work within the confines of the rule book to remove those who do not respect the wishes of the membership. We are at a point in the history of the National Reining Horse Assn. where the membership is galvanized in regards to regaining control of our organization and most anything can be accomplished.

We are totally aware of the turmoil that this process will put the National Reining Horse Association in and for this we are truly sorry. However, it has been suggested that those of us who are disgruntled could start the American Reining Horse Association. I do not agree with this approach. The NATIONAL REINING HORSE ASSOCIATION is my organization and myself and many other long time members have had our trust misplaced in the leadership and are ready to make sure that situation stops. If we have to tear NRHA down in order to fix it, then so be it.

In closing Mike, let me say that you were entrusted with the care of NRHA during this current year. It has been a year of turmoil and for that reason I’m sure you find yourself in a situation which you never expected. That being said, that is where you find yourself today. The responsibility you accepted when you took office was to represent the membership of NRHA, not two or three board members who think they know what is best for us. The responsibility is yours. It was given to you by our membership and this is your opportunity to fulfill their wishes and to become the President of NRHA who returned the organization to the membership.

CC: all elected and appointed NRHA board members

