

Oregon State Legislature  
Regarding SB 976

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From: Silent Wave Horse Rescue  
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To Whom It May Concern,

Silent Wave Horse Rescue is a nonprofit equine rescue organization, licensed and in good standing in the states of Oregon and Washington, serving the Pacific Northwest since 2014. We are located in Eastern Oregon. We work with or have worked with local law enforcement in 3 counties of Oregon, presently in good standing and active with the sheriff's departments of Grant and Wheeler counties and formerly with Hood River county (no longer active with the HR sheriff's department due to geographical challenges as we're located 3 hours away from Hood River). We are the only licensed equine rescue organization in Oregon east of the Ochocos.

Most equines we are summoned to aid or rescue have suffered neglect on par with violations of Oregon's livestock welfare laws. The vast majority of these equines are starved or starving due to lack of dental care, proper feed, and age. Owners in the vast majority of these cases either have engaged someone unqualified tending to the "veterinary" care of their horses (mules and donkeys tend to be turned out on large swaths of land with no care at all) and they justify the state of neglect of their horses by stating that they're under the care of a vet, while they are not. Every intake that we bring in is brought first to our veterinarians in John Day for assessment and immediate or critical treatment as needed. 100% of horses in these cases, as well as mules and donkeys which are just "turned out" suffer dental issues which arise out of neglect.

The teeth of equines continue growing throughout their lives. In the wild, horses and donkeys naturally grind down their incisors and molars by foraging in gritty areas, and they don't live natural lives past 30+ as domestic horses do, they normally succumb to old age or predators in their late teens to early 20's. This means their teeth are either the reason for their demise, or their teeth do not have the chance to grow out of their intended spaces. We have rescued horses who literally have teeth growing into their cheeks, tongue, gums, and sinus cavities. These horses are emaciated because the pain of eating the hay they're thrown is excruciating. I liken that pain of trying to masticate roughage with sharp and overgrown teeth to humans biting our cheeks or tongues when chewing—it's immensely painful. So horses who don't receive professional and proper dental care suffer the pain that we suffer when we accidentally bite our cheek or tongue, constantly. So they cannot masticate, cannot eat hay or grass, and they starve.

Performing dentals on equines involves an in-depth knowledge of equine anatomy. Masticating (chewing feed) is the first step in the equine digestive processes. Equine digestive processes are quite complex due to the fact that equines are hind-gut fermenters which means that whatever they swallow goes straight into their rather small stomachs and then into their massive intestine system for digestion. What goes in cannot come out. They cannot regurgitate, which is why horses are prone to colic, which is often fatal, or choke. Teeth are the beginning of this delicate process. If teeth are ill-cared-for, the horse cannot even begin to

digest its feed. This is why we intake equines which are starved, often through owner ignorance rather than outright intended neglect. The state of their teeth does not allow nutrients to enter their systems. We have rescued horses who have been administered “dentals” by unqualified individuals who attended a course on equine dentistry, at most. They are far from qualified to practice dentistry, just as a Dental Assistant with a year of training is hardly qualified to practice human dentistry.

Unlike human dentistry, equines receiving dental care must be sedated, otherwise the pain and discomfort is intolerable. Imagine having your teeth ground down, pulled, and cavities filled with no nerve block. Regular equine dentistry attention involves these procedures. Just the act of grinding an equine’s teeth is painful. Individuals with no veterinary training should not be allowed to administer sedation to equines to conduct dentals on them. Sedation is an exact science learned in veterinary school. Veterinary Assistants and Technicians with training are not allowed to sedate animals unattended by a licensed vet.

The repercussions of passing SD 976 will be chaotic at best, torturous for equines across the board, many of which will be left to suffer or will require a licensed veterinary practitioner to repair. This goes largely against the auspices of equine welfare.

Please consider SD 976 insupportable.

Thank you,  
Lisa Neuburger, Director  
Silent Wave Horse Rescue