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Bill and Sandra Johnson Suspended by the USDA for Violation of the Horse Protection Act

Champion Tennessee Walking Horse breeders fined and suspended from competition for one year by the USDA for soring and showing JFK All Over

SHELBYVILLE, TN (March 31, 2011) – The Int'l Fund for Horses report that William B. (Bill) Johnson and Sandra Johnson are suspended from being involved in “any show or event” for one year by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for violations of the Horse Protection Act in connection with the “soring” and showing of Tennessee Walking Horse champion “JFK All Over” at the 30th Annual Spring Fun Show in Shelbyville, Tennessee, in May of 2000.

The Horse Protection Act is a Federal law that prohibits horses subjected to a practice called soring from participating in shows, sales, exhibitions, or auctions.

Soring is the illegal practice of deliberately causing pain on the front legs or feet of a horse to create an exaggerated, high-stepping gait to gain a competitive edge and win ribbons in the show ring. A variety of cruel and devious methods are used to sore horses. Soring includes painting caustic chemicals on a horse's pasterns and then wrapping the legs in plastic to "cook" into the flesh or pressure shoeing with a foreign object, such as screws or bolts, or half of a golf ball.

In addition to the one-year suspension by the USDA that began January 21, 2011, Bill and Sandra Johnson each are ordered to pay a \$1,000.00 fine.

As CEO of W. B. Johnson International, Bill Johnson, made his fortune as the largest Waffle House franchisee in the US. Johnson also acquired the rights to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company name in 1983 and expanded the hotel throughout the world, eventually selling those operations to Marriott International.

As the Ritz grew, Johnson poured equal passion into a new hobby, Tennessee Walking Horses. "In the early '90s, he purchased a horse or two, and the next thing you know, he went on a run and he wanted to own the finest," said David Kranich, advertising director at *Voice of the Tennessee Walking Horse* magazine, in 2002.

Bill and Sandra Johnson are current owners of Waterfall Farms where they breed world class champion Tennessee Walking Horses such as 1999 Two-Year-Old World and Reserve World Grand Champion “JFK All Over,” the horse at the center of the Johnsons' one-year USDA suspension and penalties. “JFK All Over”, who has 10 Championship career wins, entered the breeding shed for the Johnsons where he is in stellar company. According to Waterfall Farms' website, they have 18 Stallions who altogether have accumulated at least 182 world class champion Tennessee Walking Horse titles.

“Bill and Sandra Johnson are a major influence in the Tennessee Walking Horse community in both breeding and showing,” states Vivian Grant, President of the Int'l Fund for Horses. “The penalty and suspension issued against the Johnsons by the USDA is particularly significant, and sends a clear message that soring will be punished, no matter what your stature,” she adds.

The latest enforcement of the Horse Protection Act involving Bill and Sandra Johnson by the USDA is not the first. Waterfall Farms and the Johnsons each were fined \$6,600.00 in February 2009 for entering and showing sored Tennessee Walking Horse Champion “John FK's Pusher” in the 33rd Annual National Walking Horse Trainers Show, but not suspended from competing. The Johnsons were, however, ordered to “cease and desist from violating the Act.”

Proceedings against Bill and Sandra Johnson for the soring and showing of Tennessee Walking Horse “JFK All Over” were instituted following a complaint filed by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Agency (APHIS).

“APHIS' ultimate goal in enforcing the Horse Protection Act is to eliminate soring,” states Dave Sacks, spokesman for the agency. “We will continue to work with the horse industry to protect against this inhumane practice and thereby ensure that only sound and healthy horses participate in shows, exhibits and sales.”

For more information on APHIS' enforcement of the Horse Protection Act, please go to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/hpa_info.shtml.

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The Int'l Fund for Horses is the single most influential lobbying and horse industry watchdog organization dedicated to equine welfare. Founded in 2003, the Int'l Fund for Horses works for the protection of horses through intervention, education and legislation. Learn more at <http://www.horsefund.org>. Get our latest updates via Twitter at www.twitter.com/fund4horses. Read our latest news on Tuesday's Horse at <http://tuesdayshorse.wordpress.com>.

SOURCES

USDA – APHIS Horse Protection Act Fact Sheet

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_welfare/content/printable_version/faq_rev_horsep.pdf

USDA Horse Protection Act Disqualifications and Civil Penalties List as of March 2011

<http://www.horsefund.org/resources/USDA-HPA-SUSPENSIONS-MAR2011.pdf>

Consent Decision and Order HPA 01-0127; William B Johnson and Sandra Johnson, Respondents; Feb 2, 2011

http://www.horsefund.org/resources/110202_HPA-01-0127_CD_WilliamBJohnsonandSandraJohnson.pdf

Consent Decision and Order HPA 01-0030; William B and Sandra T Johnson, Respondents; Feb. 2, 2009

http://www.horsefund.org/resources/090210_HPA-01-0030_CD_WilliamBJohnsonandSandraTJohnson.pdf

“Bill Johnson – From From a Franchisee of Waffle House to Owner of Boston Ritz-Carlton”, by Caroline Wilbert, *The Atlanta Constitution-Journal*, Dec. 15, 2002 (<http://tiny.cc/6onll>)

List of Stallions with Career Wins, Waterfall Farms

http://www.horsefund.org/resources/Waterfall_Farms_Stallion_Championships.pdf