

From the Editor

Should we speak up for the horse?

It sounds like a simple question... yet it is *anything but!* When faced with clear, distinct equine (or animal) abuse, most of us feel very compelled to speak out. But there are a million shades of gray, and one person's source of pride is another person's very definition of abuse.

It's a complicated world right now, further exaggerated by modern social media. We often hear only one side of a story. Horrible truths are concealed; negative revelations are blown out of proportion, such as cherry-picked video footage or click-bait headlines. Emotion adds to the problem; some days, it seems like a constant stream of anger, condemnation and accusation. In the online world, at least, people have taken to falling into "packs" who share the same opinions: Democrats vs. Republicans, Vegans vs. Paleo, Competitive Riders vs. Natural Horsemanship, and of course, Equine Barefooters vs. Equine Shoers. One would think we could *all* stand behind a common cause, such as horse abuse. But... *who defines what is abuse?*

Over the years, The Horse's Hoof has received stories that fall into the gray areas and been reluctant to publish them, even though we support their intent whole-heartedly. Sometimes opening a new can of worms is just not worth the price.

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Intent is often overlooked, and exacerbated by these "labels". Case in point: recently on [The Horse's Hoof Facebook Page](#), we simply re-posted (shared) a post that showed up in our news feed – a photo depicting a group of horses resting in between *bull fights*. The copy was a slightly horrific description of treatment that such horses receive, many ending in death in the ring. I try not to dwell on it, but I've read enough description in various locations to know that the copy was true, at least for some horses. This was a small, innocuous photo, and just a small paragraph of text – not a big post – with no graphic details. I simply commented, "My heart breaks for these horses." Absolute truth, and I stand by that 100%.

Well, stand aside as the internet explodes. The post went viral (for us) and when I checked back, there were hundreds of comments, with many negative comments – people attacking The Horse's Hoof for daring to post such a thing, and many saying they were "unfollowing" The Horse's Hoof because

of it. I kid you not. A large percentage of people were violently offended that the post came from a "**vegan**" news Facebook page – therefore it must be false (because anything "vegan" was bad)? I'm not a vegan, and their post had nothing to do with veganism. It wasn't even sensationalistic; it was simple, with a basic message that bull-fighting was bad for horses. You'd think everyone would agree, right? As violent as the explosion was, one would think I had posted bloody photos of horses being gored by bulls or something equally horrific!

In this world, you are damned if you do, and damned if you don't. Because the ruckus was getting louder, I solved the problem by simply deleting the entire post, comments and all. Bye bye. For the people who actually unliked [The Horse's Hoof Facebook Page](#) because of one single post that was actually pro-horse? Maybe they confused us with someone else? Or did not understand that The Horse's Hoof was created to support the HORSE and (politely) contradict the humans that have mismanaged the horse. There was nothing rude, or gross, or out of line in that post. It simply offended some people who chose to take it a certain way. Am I responsible for that? No, my responsibility lies with the horse, and I will continue to live that way.

That said, you don't have to go overboard in your quest to condemn horse abuse. After all, that's how PETA ended up where they are now. **Choose your fights wisely!** But if something strikes you as being wrong, and harmful to horses, do not be afraid to stand up for what is right! Horses do not have voices – we do. Remember, the pioneers of the barefoot & natural horse care movement had the COURAGE to stand up and condemn all the centuries-old practices that were harming horses. Those are our roots. Never forget that.

Happy Hooves! – Yvonne Welz

Photos: riding on Wishing Welz Ranch in February 2019.

