

New York State Equine Industry Leaders

January 6, 2011

Patrick Hooker/Commissioner
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
10 B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235

Re: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets/New York State Horse Health Assurance Program (NYSHHAP)

Dear Commissioner,

This letter is being written with great concern from the New York State Equine Industry Leaders group. The group is made up of members with representation from many different facets of the equine industry in New York State. A list of members is attached listing names and the organizations of affiliation, for your information.

The group meets twice per year in Albany, with state-wide representation. The Equine Leaders have been meeting since December, 1998 to discuss current and important issues in the industry. Dr. Lyda Denney was a significant participant and contributor to this group for many years. Dr. Denney was a veterinarian whom worked for NYS Agriculture and Markets/Division of Animal Health and was the coordinator of the New York State Horse Health Assurance Program (NYSHHAP).

In the fall of 2010 the Equine Leader group became aware that due to budget cuts that the NYSHHAP was cut and that Dr. Denney's position as coordinator was terminated. With an estimated 197,000 equines, that have an estimated value of \$1.83 billion, with \$10.4 billion in equine related assets, 12,500 employed by equine operations, and 987,000 acres attributed to the industry in the state - the equine industry is in fact very important to the this state and its economy. The NYSHHAP was a program for the equine industry that was similar to the NYSCHAP program that has supported the dairy industry for many years. The program raised the quality of the horse industry, its productivity, professionalism, bio-security, and the health and welfare of the animals in the state. The equine program received national recognition due to its reputation for excellence.

The Horse Industry Leaders group was greatly troubled by this loss, both of the program and of the expertise of Dr. Denney. The horse industry is a part of agriculture in New York State and has significant impact. The group is fully aware of the severe budget situation across the state and the many programs that fall under your direction. Do consider this important program when budget negotiations take place for 2011 and beyond. Many in the equine industry have moved out of this state due to more advantageous conditions in other states – weather, taxes, industry programs, industry incentives, etc. We need to keep the horse industry in the fore front as one of the major players in agriculture in New York State. This program did just that.

Sincerely,

The New York State Equine Industry Leaders