

From: Kevin Erickson (KEVIN.ERICKSON@ferndalesd.org)

Subject: Re: VETERINARIANS?

Date: 2016-02-09 22:05:01

To: Linda Quinn <LINDA.QUINN@ferndalesd.org>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>; Jeff

Gardner <jeff.gardner@ferndalesd.org> [REDACTED]

<[REDACTED]>;

CC: Linda Quinn [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Jeff Gardner

Dear [REDACTED]

Once again, thank you for taking the time to share your concerns about the Donkey Basketball event scheduled this weekend in Ferndale. Admittedly, I hesitate to provide you with the names and contact information of the veterinarians I have consulted for fear that they will be bombarded by undue emails and phone calls regarding this issue. These are busy professionals, with a combined total of over 100 years of equine veterinary service dedicated to the wellbeing of animals and have graciously provided me with a great deal of insight into this issue. With their assistance, I have also heard input from the American Association of Equine Practitioners, the American Donkey & Mule Society, the local humane society that visited the Donkey Sports, Inc. farm where these donkeys live, from Bruce Wick, President of Donkey Sport, Inc. and Laura Clark, Whatcom Humane Society director. Interestingly, neither the American Association of Equine Practitioners or the American Donkey & Mule Society have come out against these events.

The main reason that I did not contact [REDACTED] regarding this issue, is that I was seeking the input of equine veterinarians. In soliciting input from local veterinarians about equine vets [REDACTED]'s name was not mentioned. Additionally, in looking at [REDACTED]'s website ([REDACTED]) after you posed the question, I see no obvious mention of [REDACTED] actively working with horses. Granted, [REDACTED] most recent blog addresses acute hives in horses, but as a non-pack member, I'm unable to read most of [REDACTED] posting so I refrain from additional comment. I was also unaware that [REDACTED] had offered to provide a free demonstration on how to work with horses without cruelty. While I certainly appreciate this offer, as I'm sure do others throughout the district, I'd likely default to a demonstration by a veterinarian that regularly works with horses, mules and donkeys.

In regards to this issue having a definite answer, I still see it as being very susceptible to personal interpretation. Articles abound decrying the cruelty of the event as well as those questioning how it is interpreted as cruelty. Given the amount of time spent discussing this issue, I do not feel that it can fairly be stated that Ferndale has refused to consider valid concerns. Quite the contrary, we have spent considerable time considering these concerns and trying to determine the best course of action.

The weight limit that I was informed of for this event is two hundred pounds. I am unaware of any 110 weight limit, but would certainly be open to hearing where that number originated

from. In discussing this with my equine experts, the appropriate weight limit for a donkey/mule is quite dependent on the duration and activity being undertaken by the animal while bearing this load. In their mind, 200 pound did not seem unreasonable, but they had not seen the size of the animals so this was not an absolute.

As I mentioned earlier, a great deal of time has been spent discussing this issue including researching concerns and considering alternatives. Unfortunately there are two very opposing view points each with strong opinions that may never see eye to eye. That is unfortunate. As I mentioned in the letter to Ms. Robson that you cited, the Ferndale district intends to further consider these views and concerns as we review the event with our students to determine if this is an event that should be continued in the future.

Sincerely,
Kevin Erickson, President
Ferndale School Board