

**AG NOTES**  
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**FARMERS MARKET**

The market will be open during the two weeks of the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration. I repeat, the market will be open during the horse show weeks.

We have been having several vendors with a big assortment of vegetables and baked goods. Produce was a little late this year, but now it is in full production and the quality is good.

Come to the market on Thursday afternoons at 2:30 pm (no early sales) and visit with our local vendors. All of our products are locally grown or produced. The market is at the Farmers Market Pavilion next to the big blue water tower at the Celebration Grounds.

**I'LL BE THERE**

I've written before about the Celebration. I'll say this again.

I'll be in the stands at the Celebration. I've missed very few nights since 1970. I've written here before that the first time I came to this town I was in a horse van and how I spent ten nights at old Barn 19 where 17 is now. Never did I dream that I would get to live here. It was and is a wonderful time for me.

As a student of animal breeding, I truly appreciate the work done over the years to develop a horse with the ability and talent and the looks to walk in its distinct gait. This animal ranks well with some other breeds and ahead of many others in versatility, pleasure, showiness and temperament.

Here's what I think. There have been legitimate concerns about these magnificent animals and their treatment. No one that I've talked to, and I mean no one, condones abuse and the people who have done it. The situation has been a long time coming, and it's going to take a long time to correct it, maybe even a new generation of horsemen. But it's so much better now. So much better! Progress has been made and continues to be made in their protection.

To be sure, there have been tremendous strides in this effort to correct the problems of abuse and performance enhancement. The numbers speak for themselves. Compliance numbers are huge compared to non-compliance. Since all of the final judgments are subjective opinions in nature, most folks wonder if there will ever be an absolute zero of non-compliance. But the industry is working on it.

If you look at the data, the walking horse inspections show few findings, but the point is that these inspections are working. There are many, many horses in compliance with the inspections by licensed and certified veterinarians charged with enforcement of the Horse Protection Act, and by lay persons who have been trained by these government officials to help in the inspection process and certified to perform as an extension of the veterinarians. These compliance ratios verify that the inspection process is working.

How do these compliance figures compare to other fields? It is common knowledge that over time athletes of several different sports have been accused of illegal activities. Even the Olympics and other human and animal sports have had issues of non-compliance, and there has in the past even been gender-testing of athletes to determine the fairness of competition. High school and college sports are not immune to controversy in some of these areas. The compliance rates of these activities are comparable to the HPA numbers in that non-compliance is the small exception rather than the rule.

But the point here is that people still support these activities in spite of even a small non-compliance rate. We don't shut down the Olympics or high schools or colleges or professional teams

who have had a bad apple that contaminated part of the barrel. We watch them and support them anyway, leaving the compliance enforcement up to the experts. We expect, however, that the experts do their job in using research-based scientific methods and fair regulations to protect the horse and at the same time their owners from subjective and inaccurate decisions in the process. So many of the opinions in the world are based on emotions and not science.

The good in this industry is huge. The good horses are great. The owners and trainers are, too. The community funds benefit, the scholarships to higher education, the pride of the community and country, are all by-products of these activities. In this case, the livelihood of so many good decent people and their neighbors who care about the animals is at stake. It's not just the good of the horse, which is primary, but also the good of the people associated with the animal in any way.

That is why I plan to be there. I love the animal. I appreciate its humble beginnings on middle Tennessee farms a century ago more than most. I recognize the effort of early breeders to blend the genetics to create this animal more than most. I appreciate the good trainers who work these animals honestly without shortcuts and gimmicks and who give them good care.

I'm going to be there in my seat. I'm going to eat and drink with the various groups that need my support. I'm going to support the industry that helps support my community. And if I see something that needs to be corrected, I'll do my best to get it done.

The excitement is building, and I can't wait. I'll be there!