



Pennsylvania Equine Council

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Pennsylvania Equine Council's Opposition to Sunday Hunting

The Pennsylvania Equine Council is an all-volunteer organization that represents the horse industry/community in Pennsylvania. We work to try and keep Pennsylvania a horse friendly state. We oppose any expansion of Sunday hunting.

The horse industry is part of Pennsylvania's agricultural and recreation/tourism industries that are the top two industries in Pennsylvania. According to the 2018 economic impact study conducted by the American Horse Council, the horse industry in Pennsylvania contributes \$3.3 billion to the state's economy with an employment impact of 60,133 jobs. Pennsylvania ranks as the eighth largest state in horse population with approximately 223,628 equine in the state. 70 percent of this number is the recreational horse, used for recreational riding with an economic impact of \$1.01 billion. The study also shows that 26 percent of all trail riders come from out of state contributing an unknown amount of economic impact. Pennsylvania's horse industry bridges into the recreation industry making horse owners stakeholders if not partners in open space and wildlife habitat. Fields for hay and grain production to feed horses as well as pasture lands truly support wildlife. Horses may be the only link to agriculture and the outdoors that many children and adults will ever have. The non-consumptive viewing of wildlife from horseback allows the young as well as the older population and people with disabilities to travel into the wild areas and not only enjoy the abundance of birds and animals but truly gain a love for the nature with which we have been so blessed.

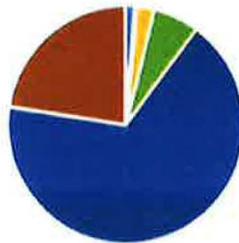
In 2002 the Pennsylvania Game Commission shut down 1.4 million acres of game lands for use with equine and bicycles. The Pennsylvania Equine Council worked with the Game Commission to change their standard operating procedure by which equestrians could access game lands using designated trails and to access other public lands such as Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' 2.5 million acres and Allegheny National Forest's 517,000 acres. These designated trails that are an important connection for access are open year-round EXCEPT from the last Saturday in September until the third Saturday in January. These trails are then open only on Sundays. Might I say, this is the best time of the year to enjoy the cooler temperatures and the beautiful fall foliage that draws millions to the northeast.

As it stands now, if Sunday hunting is allowed the equine community loses access to other public and private lands by not being able to use designated trails across game lands from the last Saturday in September until the third Saturday in January. That is if Sunday hunting would only affect game lands. If Sunday hunting is opened state wide,

and I see no distinction in this bill, essentially not only the equestrians but all others who enjoy that one day a week out in nature would lose the tranquility they seek. Whether real or imagined, many believe that there is potential for harm while conducting their outdoor activities during the time that hunters are afield. Also they do not want to interrupt hunters during their pursuit of their recreation. Sitting on several outdoor committees over the years, it has been my observation that the bulk of outdoor recreationists are non-hunters and I would not want to see them become anti-hunter.

In 2018 the Pennsylvania Equine Council conducted a survey of the equine owners who attended Horse World Expo at the Farm Show Complex held every year. We found the results to be very similar to the one we took in 2011. As you can see the "No Sunday Hunting" has it even by hunters, with a total of 89.8% opposed to Sunday hunting.

2018 Sunday Hunting Survey



- Yes / Hunters
- Yes / Archery only/Hunter
- Yes if Designated Trails were open
- except for Rifle Deer/Bear
- Yes if designated trails were open
- except for deer and bear/Hunters
- No Sunday
- No Sunday/Hunters

- We would ask the House members to please consider the impact the expansion of Sunday hunting would have on a \$3.3 billion industry by limiting access to other public lands by recreational riders and to vote "No" for any expansion to Sunday hunting.

This will be a hit to Pennsylvania's horse industry as well as the economic impact from resident and non-resident users alike.

Respectfully,

Bud Wills
Pennsylvania Equine Council
Vice President
State Trail Chair