
Riding Stables Chapter

Program at a Glance

The Legislature created the Riding Stables Chapter (the Chapter) in 1989 to promote humane treatment and conditions for horses the public used in riding and carriage stables. Initially, the Texas Department of Health (TDH) administered the Chapter. Due to concerns that the protection of animals was not within the public health mission of TDH, the Legislature transferred the program to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) in 2001.

TAHC acquired regulatory responsibility on September 1, 2001 and adopted rules governing the Riding Stable Registration Program. The program's major functions include:

- registration of all stables renting one or more equines, defined as horses, donkeys, and mules, for riding or carriage purposes;
- biennial inspections of the condition of facilities and the health of equines; and
- denial, revocation, or suspension of certificates of registration if TAHC finds violations of care and treatment standards.

Key Facts

The information in the text below reflects the resources and operation of the riding stable program only, not the Texas Animal Health Commission as a whole.

- **Funding and Fees.** State law authorizes TAHC to collect fees from registered stables to cover the costs of this program. In fiscal year 2002, the Legislature appropriated approximately \$30,000 to TAHC to regulate stables. TAHC collected \$21,200 in fees during that year.
- **Staffing.** TAHC uses the equivalent of about two full time employees, including staff in both the Austin and the eight field operations offices, to administer the program.
- **Registrations and Inspections.** In fiscal year 2002, TAHC registered 143 riding stables. During the years that TDH administered the Chapter, the Department registered 45 stables.
- **Complaints and Enforcement.** TAHC received two complaints against a riding stable in fiscal year 2002. Thus far, TAHC has not denied, suspended, or revoked any certificates of registration. Previously TDH received approximately one complaint a year.

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Recommendation

1. Repeal the Riding Stables Chapter, Effective September 1, 2003.

Issue 1 | The State Has No Clear Public Need to Regulate Riding Stables.

Key Findings

- No clear public need could be found for continuing the regulation of riding stables.
- Limitations of the current regulatory framework further contribute to the lack of need for this oversight.

The intent of the Riding Stables Chapter was to help prevent situations that expose horses used recreationally to unnecessary health and safety risks. However, the State has neither uncovered nor addressed any significant problems during 13 years of inspections and investigations of complaints. In addition, problems with the Chapter's scope, enforcement authority, and funding further contribute to the limited need for continuing this oversight. The ability to respond to the one to two complaints a year, none of which have resulted in any type of enforcement action, fails to justify the ongoing cost and burden this regulation places on stable owners.

Recommendation**Change in Statute****1.1 Repeal the Riding Stables Chapter, effective September 1, 2003.**

This recommendation would end the state regulation of riding stables in Texas. If repealed by the 78th Legislature, the regulation would end September 1, 2003. The Texas Animal Health Commission would continue to protect and promote health among Texas' animal populations but would no longer specifically oversee the care and treatment of recreational horses housed in riding stables.

Fiscal Implication Summary _____

This recommendation would result in no net fiscal impact to the State.

