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Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources To Study Equine Husbandry Practices in the State

Sec. 1 Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to convene a working group. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall convene a working group to evaluate the care of equines in the State and recommend any changes necessary to ensure the humane treatment of equines and effective enforcement of state laws. The commissioner shall invite the following to participate in the working group: a veterinarian specializing in equine care; a farrier; an owner of an equine breeding stable; an owner or operator of an equine boarding stable; an owner of show horses; a person who has served as a superintendent for equine pulling events; a person who owns one or more horses for pleasure and does not benefit commercially from an equine-related business; a representative of an animal shelter whose primary mission is the care and rehabilitation of abused equines; a member of the Maine Animal Control Association; and an attorney with knowledge of the State's animal welfare laws. The director of the animal welfare program within the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, the state veterinarian assigned to the animal welfare program and a member of the Animal Welfare Advisory Council designated by the commissioner shall participate in the working group. The department shall provide staff to and coordinate meetings of the working group using existing resources or funds specifically donated to facilitate this undertaking; and be it further

Sec. 2 Duties. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, in consultation with the working group under section 1, shall:

1. Review annual reports submitted in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 7, section 3906-B for 2006, 2007 and 2008 and examine summary data presented in these reports for data on the number of investigations of cruelty to equines and the final disposition of those cases;

2. Review existing statutory provisions pertaining to the care of equines and behaviors or conditions that constitute neglect or abuse under state law;

3. Review existing best management practices and standards of care for equines in the statutes and in the regulations of other states and other practices and standards developed by agencies or organizations to promote good equine husbandry; and

4. Develop approaches to reducing the incidence of equine abuse and neglect in the State. Approaches may differ to appropriately target equine owners and stable owners with varying objectives; and be it further

Sec. 3 Reporting date established. Resolved: That, no later than January 15, 2010, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall submit a report with findings and recommendations pursuant to the review under section 2, including any recommended legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The joint standing committee may submit legislation pertaining to promoting good equine husbandry practices and ensuring the enforcement of the State's animal welfare laws to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.