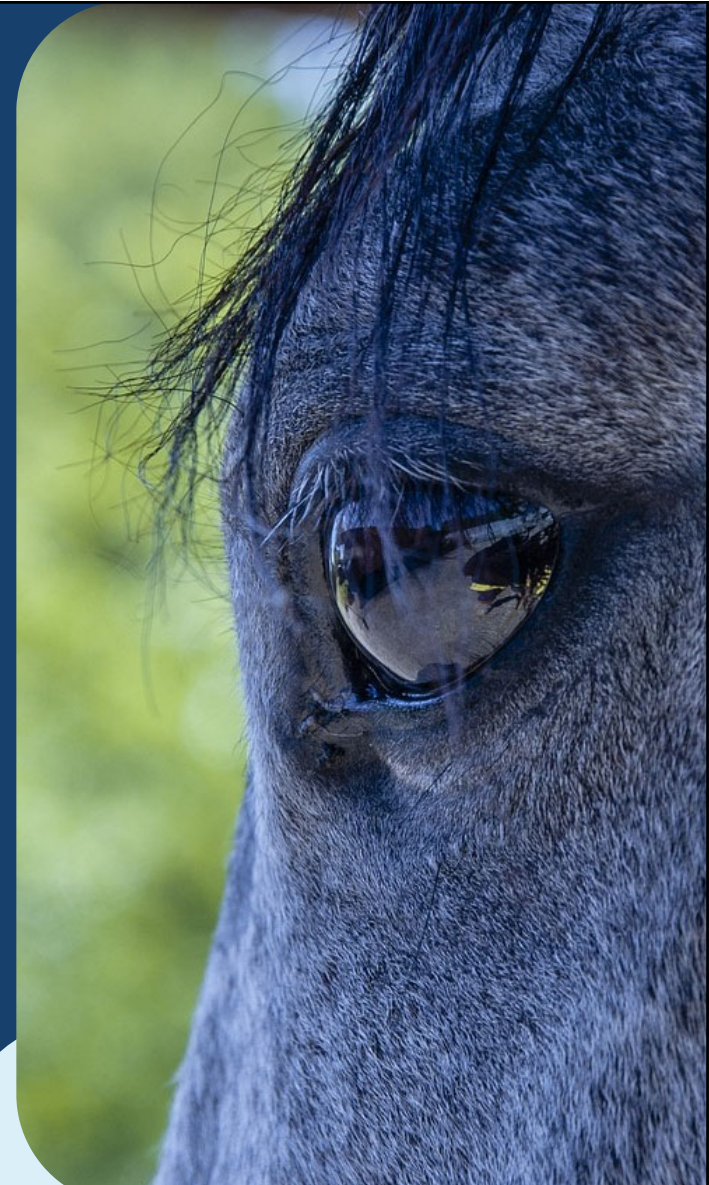


The EAS Horse-Human Partnership and our Social License to Operate

How it may impact EAS tomorrow and in the future.

Dr. C. Mike Tomlinson DVM MBA
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WTF is SLO?

We used to think what we did is our business, and nobody else can make me change, especially somebody who has no idea what I am doing. What right does anyone have to tell me how to conduct my sessions?

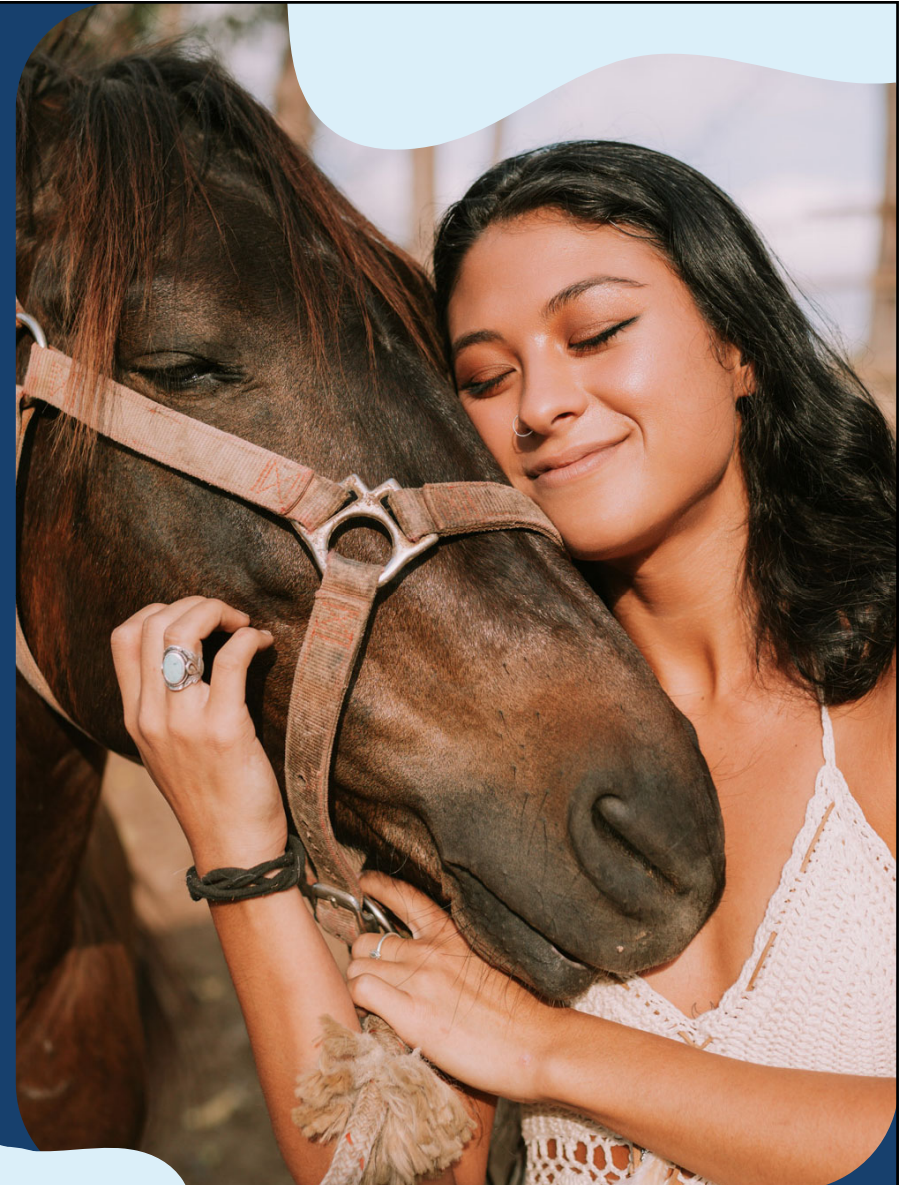
The reality is that the public does not have a right to tell you how to run your business, but they do have the right to place restrictions on what you do and how you do it in their jurisdiction.

WTF is SLO?

The concept of 'Social License to Operate' (SLO) is relevant to all animal-use activities. A SLO is an intangible, implicit agreement between the public and an industry/group.

Its existence allows that industry/group to pursue its activities with minimal formalized restrictions because such activities have widespread societal approval.

In contrast, the imposition of legal restrictions—or even an outright ban—reflect a qualified or lack of public support for an activity.





WTF is SLO?

Social License to Operate

is a phrase that truly means:

Political and Public Acceptance and Trust.

People who know little to nothing about horses have the power to determine what is or is not socially acceptable.

That can have a big impact on everything equestrian.

City of Berkeley, CA

For example, the City of Berkeley CA City Council narrowly defeated a measure that would have prohibited horses from being in their stalls more than 14 hours a day. That sounds reasonable – horses appreciate being allowed to be in a pasture.

What most people do not realize is that the stables for Golden Gate Fields is within the city limits of Berkeley, so if the measure passed, Golden Gate Fields would have to move all of the horses out the next day and never again have any racing in Northern California.



Why Are You Listening Tonight?

So why are people listening to this webcast tonight?
Is everyone here to see how they can help
improve the public acceptance and trust of
equestrianism worldwide? How naïve.

When I was about to give a similar talk in Sydney
last summer, I was so excited that nearly 200
people wanted to help improve equestrian SLO.

About halfway through the presentation
I realized nearly all of them were there to
see how they were going to be affected.

Only a handful were there to help.





I want to discuss specifically how SLO is currently affecting EAS and how it appears that it might do so in the near future.

But before we understand SLO, we must understand the horse.
Let's quickly set some basic givens for the horse.



Understanding the Horse

Origin

Forager

Gregarious

Perceptive/Sensitive

Flight animal

Inquisitive/Boredom

Quiet speaker

Sleep needs

Safety and Consistency



Understanding the Horse

Origin

There is debate as to when was the “origin” of horses, but all agree that they were much smaller before man began selective breeding them. The typical pre-man size is often stated to be around 250-450 pounds.

Remember, horses did not evolve bigger, they were bred by man to be bigger. When left alone in the wild, feral horses shrink with every generation, usually eventually being considered “pony” size.



Understanding the Horse

Forager

The horse's digestive tract is more functionally like a cow's than a dog's. It requires a constant source of high fiber roughage flowing through it 24 hours a day. Any interruption in the flow or consistency of the forage often disrupts the digestive bacteria and results in significant gastrointestinal discomfort.

Horses are intended to have their head down walking forward for up to 20 hours a day. They do not look where they have been, and they don't eat the tallest grass in the pasture.



Understanding the Horse

Gregarious

Horses are prey. There is safety in numbers. If everyone in the herd is looking out, it is much more likely the predator will be seen in time.

Alone, a horse must remain 100% vigilant at all times. In a herd of trusted mates, a horse can occasionally let the others stand guard and let their hair down.

The ability to relax, even if only for a few minutes, is essential for well-being.



Understanding the Horse

Perceptive/Sensitive

They may have the exact same types of senses that we do, but theirs are significantly more sensitive.

Horses may not see color as well as we do, but they can see movement that we could only perceive with a telescope. Their hearing is not only better, but also highly directional. Their skin everywhere is as sensitive as the tips of our fingers.

Their ability to sense emotions in those around them is legendary. They know how you are feeling more accurately than you do.



Understanding the Horse

Flight animal

Horses are the only domesticated animal that has flight as their primary defense from predators.

They run first and ask questions later. But they also learn (habituate) faster than most other animals. Fleeing unnecessarily is very expensive: in lost eating time, potential injury, and energy wasted.

Horse learn very quickly what must be fled, and what is just annoying. This constant learning is important to their health.



Understanding the Horse

Inquisitive/Boredom

Horses are very inquisitive. Maybe not like predator cats cooped up in a house all day, but certainly more than most species. Horses need mental stimulation to prevent boredom.

Boredom leads to vices. Weaving, stall pacing, and many other vices can be directly traced to boredom.

The only thing worse for a horse than boredom is constant anxiety.



Understanding the Horse

Quiet speaker

Horses are very soft speakers. When they want the predator to hear they are extremely loud. But when they are not talking to the predator approaching, they often speak silently. That way the predator does not know what is being said among the horses.

Horses that are hurt usually try to hide this from the rest of the world. A predator always looks for the most vulnerable, so the hypochondriac went first.

We must learn to listen to the horses and understand what they are trying to say to us.



Understanding the Horse

Sleep needs

Researchers are learning more about the sleep needs of horses every day. The fact that they can sleep standing is true, but we now know that they cannot effectively undergo deep restorative when standing. If you were not allowed to have deep sleep for even a few days, you would be a different person.

A predator looks for the horses lying down as they take the longest to run away. This is hard wired into nearly every horse. Horses must feel safe in order to have truly restorative sleep.



Understanding the Horse

Consistency and Safety

Horses often are said to need consistency. Their gastrointestinal track definitely prefers consistency. And for many consistency is a foundation of safety. But if a horse feels safe, then they need variety to keep them from boredom.

Consistency alone is not necessarily optimal for a horse. The feeling of safety is the most essential ingredient for thriving.



So let's get back to this Social License thing.

A while back we could honestly say "Oh, that's just PETA" and ignore it.

Now there is a whole discussion about
Animal Rights vs. Animal Welfare

Are "Enslaved" animals being used for human benefit?

History of SLO

When you say they cannot tell you what you can do, you may be right.

What they can do, is tell you what you cannot do.



History of SLO



Marine Mammal industry:
The *Blackfish* movie may have been greatly fictionalized for dramatic effect – it was stated to be a fictional script – but it became reality to the public.

History of SLO

Do you remember
greyhound racing?

How about the equestrian
jumping phase of Modern
Pentathlon in the Olympics?





SLO Today

Equestrian services education is a mentor-style learning. You cannot learn this from a book or the Internet. You learn from a mentor.

When you are out on your own, you do as your mentor taught you. Too often we do not ask if what we were taught is best or if it is just “normal.”

We are finding that some things that are “normal” to equestrians are horrifying to the naïve public. We must take a step back and look at ourselves.

SLO Today

So why do I mention horse racing in the same sentence as equine assisted services?

Because many in the public do not differentiate between how a horse is involved.

Most of the uneducated public does not differentiate between horse racing, rodeo, circus horses, jumping, or Equine Assisted Services.





SLO Solutions

I have painted a fairly hopeless picture so far. What I want you to take home is how we together can turn this bleak future into a thriving future that continues having horses in our lives in a way that is acceptable to everyone.

Do not worry, horses still can have a job and work daily, but they must be respected and valued.

The public must feel that everyone associated with horses has the intention to care for them, to empathize with them, and to look out for their best interests.

SLO Solutions

There must be metrics about how a horse feels that are reproducible, consistent, and objective. There are many such metrics already studied.

I will be travelling to New Zealand next month for the International Society for Equitation Science conference at which many more metrics and studies will be discussed.

One such metric is the Ethogram for Pain Scoring. It is a science-based system for scoring equine pain: 24 indicators - <https://www.24horsebehaviors.org/> by Dr. Sue Dyson.



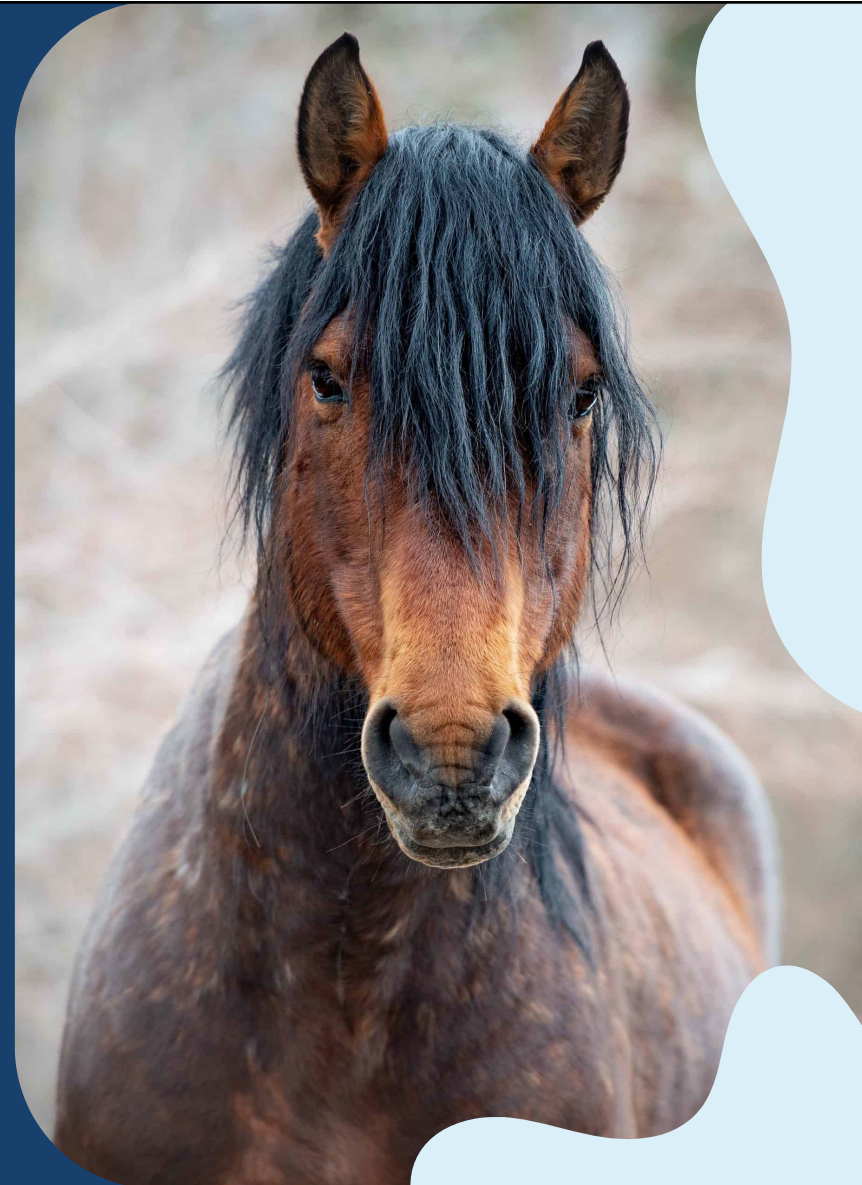
SLO Solutions

Maintaining a Social License to Operate requires far more than just well researched metrics.

The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Social Trust requires transparency of operations, establishment and communication of shared values, and demonstration of competence. These attributes can only be gained by taking an ethics-based, proactive, progressive, and holistic approach to the protection of equine welfare.

SLO acceptance is won not by what is said, but by what is done.





SLO Solutions

We must:

1. Educate;
2. Communicate;
3. Prioritize Welfare;
4. Be proactive; and
5. Be ethical.

Embrace change/evolution.



SLO Solutions

Make sure what you put out there portrays what you want it to.

Ask “Should I ?” instead of “Could I ?”

If you see something, say something.

Most of us are sometimes blinded by what we have always done – help those around you to understand how the uneducated might perceive it.

Current Hot Topics



Current hot topics:

1. Are the horses fit enough to do what they are asked to do?
2. Are the horses treated as individuals or simply a cog in the wheel?
3. How about the other 23 hours each day?
4. How are EAS facilities accountable?
How do you enforce adequate knowledge?
5. How can we accurately and quickly assess physical or emotional stress?
6. Equipment suitability assessment and enforcement?

5 Domains

2020 version – David J Mellor



Five Domains:

1. Nutrition (adequate, appropriate, available)
2. Physical Environment (footing/bedding, temp, light, noise, air quality [pollutants, odors])
3. Health (staying as optimally healthy as possible – fitness, injuries, weight, disabilities)
4. Behavioral Interactions (socializations, agency[choice], learning/exploration)
5. Mental State (safety, consistency, expectations, sleep, boredom, helplessness)

Questions?





Questions?



THANK YOU!