

February 4, 2022

Rachel Ramos
Concessions Manager
Recreation and Parks Department
221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 350
Los Angeles, California 90012

**RESPONSE TO REQUIRED ACTIONS BASED ON FINDINGS
FROM THIRD PARTY GRIFFITH PARK PONY RIDES POLICIES
AND PRACTICES ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Dear Rachel Ramos,

Let me begin by summarizing the importance of Griffith Park Pony Rides to the City of Los Angeles. We are an iconic institution serving the children of Los Angeles for more than 70 years. We serve a diverse community of which 65% are Hispanic. We are one of the most popular concessions in the city, providing over 200,000 pony rides a year. We also have a very loyal customer base of second and third generation Angelinos. At one time or another it seems like everyone has been to our pony rides; in 70 years literally millions of children. Nowhere else in Los Angeles can a person get to ride a horse for only \$5. We allow children to have a hands-on experience with animals which is priceless and can lead to a greater respect for life and nature. This is why Griffith Park Pony Rides is listed nationally on the “Top 20 Things for Children to do in Los Angeles.”

When I took over the pony ride concession five years ago it was in a serious state of disrepair. I had to rectify 20 years of neglect. I invested heavily not only in the facilities improvements but also in veterinary procedures for the ponies to make certain they were in the best of health. Many of the ponies were unusable for riding for the general public. I kept some of these ponies on our property to provide a sanctuary for them even though they would never be used for riding. I have let them live out their years here in peaceful retirement, refusing to sell the ponies at auction where their fate could not be determined. It was reward for their many years of work for the children of Los Angeles.

I was pleased to read in Dr. Sacher's assessment that "the working conditions were satisfactory and there were no gross violations related to the care or the treatment of the animals." In the Commission Task Force Meeting on February 3rd Dr. Sacher stated that in her opinion the workload of our ponies is only "minimal," adding "It's a wonderful opportunity for people of any background to have access to get on a horse – even if they have no background – for a very low price." Her suggestions to ensure compliance with the legal standards set forth by California Health and Safety Codes of a commercial horse operation are of a higher standard than even a training barn. We embrace the opportunity to learn from the outside vet on what improvements we can make to our procedures. I can assure you that we will implement any suggested changes that would benefit the safety of our ponies and children. This is a good exercise for us to have gone through. In fact, in this short period of time since I received the report, I have implemented and adopted **ALL** of Dr. Sacher's suggested changes in our operation.

Let me now respond to all of the issues raised in your January 26th letter.

VETERINARY CARE

1. We have removed from service the ponies needing treatment or currently being treated for saddles sores, farrier care, or additional veterinarian follow-up care. Specifically, three ponies were identified as having saddle sores. These ponies were already removed from service and being treated for their condition. We do not work ponies with active saddle sores. One of the ponies has already been examined by our vet and certified in writing as being fit to return to service. Your department has already received the documentation from our vet. Another of the ponies had not worked and has been out of service for over three months and may be retired for other reasons. The third pony is being treated under the care of our vet and is healing well and will soon be ready for service with vet approval.
2. As for the ponies identified as needing immediate dental care, ALL of these ponies have already received dental procedures by our vet with documentation in their files for your review. For the lesser cases of dental issues, they will be watched and treated over the next few months per the outside vet request.

RECORDS

- 1) (& 2.) We have always maintained three separate files on each of our ponies: veterinarian care, farrier care, and identification records. Since Dr. Sacher informed us that the California Health and Safety Code requires an individual single file for each pony, we have consolidated our three files into one. These files contain name, breed, color, markings, size, age, sex, and photograph per regulation. To make the paperwork even more useful and transparent we have added farrier, veterinary, and feed records also to their individual files. We thank Dr. Sacher for informing us of these requirements and will continue to operate under this pony paperwork system.
3. Several years ago we put together an Employee Manual for the use of our employees. This manual covers daily pony care procedures. We may be the only operation of our kind to even have such a manual. A section on acceptable working temperatures for the ponies was already a part of the manual. The care that must be provided during times when the temperatures rise and fall were added per the vet request.

FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT IMPROVEMENTS

1. The chain link fencing at Griffith Park Pony rides is probably 40 years old. It was the fencing I inherited from the prior owner. We had been making spot repairs of this fencing when needed. I have already had a fencing company out to the pony rides and all of the obtrusive fencing is now repaired or replaced.
2. Dr. Sacher suggested that we use breakaway halters while the ponies are in their corrals. We have gone a step better and eliminated any halter being left on the ponies while they are in their corrals.
3. All of our outside corrals have overhead shade protection. Several corrals have multiple overhead shade protection areas for the ponies. Our fencing company has recommended side protection that would shield the ponies from the wind and rain also. Such material is now on order and the

company will install a sample shield for RAP to review, and if approved will be added to all of our corrals.

4. Dr. Sacher recommended additional water access and shading for the ponies while they work. We have never experienced a pony not able to reach the existing water while in the riding rings. However, to increase the transparency to the public we have already purchased and installed five 50-gallon water tanks directly under the existing water areas. We have ordered shading material to add to the area at the head of the ring, for any pony that may not be currently standing completely under shade.
5. We have always had a policy for slowing down or shutting down pony operations in rain or intense heat. We are the only pony ride operation to have water misters installed for all of our ponies standing in the ring. This lowers the outside air temperature by 10 to 15 degrees. Our ponies all are given regular breaks, often without their saddles and often being cooled with water, during hot days. In fact, every day of our operation we give our ponies regular breaks while they work. We are always monitoring our ponies when there are conditions of extreme heat. When the heat rises to this level, we shut the pony operations down. We have purchased a large outdoor thermometer to be in easy view of both the public and our employees to increase transparency as Dr. Sacher suggested. We are preparing signage also to reflect this policy to the public. This signage will also address pony breaks.

In closing, I would like to add a couple of personal thoughts. Griffith Park Pony Rides is not just a business to me. It is a place that shines with happy laughing children and proud parents all year long. I assure you that going forward with all the recommendations implemented we will continue to be the iconic Los Angeles institution we have been for 70 years.

Sincerely,



Steve Weeks
Concession Owner, Griffith Park Pony Rides