



NEW JERSEY HORSE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

February 26, 2008

The Board of the New Jersey Horse Council is deeply concerned by Governor Corzine's plan to eliminate the Department of Agriculture. If this plan is carried out, it will do irreparable damage to the Equine Industry as part of the agricultural infrastructure of New Jersey.

Although in-state horse breeding has declined, New Jersey still offers some of the top stallions in the country. The Meadowlands and Monmouth Park are showcases for horse racing and the Horse Park of New Jersey is a top line facility which hosts international competitions.

We are home to an excellent 4-H Equine program, where young people under the guidance of experienced leaders learn the importance of the equine industry and agriculture. Our young 4-H members compete with their peers from other states in myriad events - based on horsemanship, agricultural and equine knowledge, and leadership, among other things - and consistently place in the top 10 nationwide.

Rutgers University, our state university, offers excellent programs on Animal Health and Welfare, where students prepare for their future in veterinary practice, agribusiness, and other venues of the equine and agricultural industries.

Our Farmland Preservation and Open Space programs have made New Jersey a model for other states and communities looking to protect and uphold their local agriculture.

The aptly-named Garden State has much to offer to the rest of the nation, including but not limited to: blueberries (2nd in the nation in production), cranberries (3rd in the nation in production), tomatoes, soy beans, premier hay, horses, and other commodities.

If our government eliminates the Department of Agriculture, with it some of the vastly important programs and farmers' incentives, there will be an exodus of people out of New Jersey and the open spaces we once fought to preserve will quickly fill with housing developments and commercial shopping centers.

It is appalling to use the excuse of 'cost-cutting' to diminish the quality of life for the New Jersey people.

We urge you to contact the people you elected to be your voice in Trenton and tell them that 'Yes, we understand cuts have to be made, but No, the proposed cut of the Department of Agriculture is not acceptable.'