



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIVITY – FORT CAVAZOS  
80<sup>TH</sup> & ENGINEER DRIVE, BUILDING 4297  
FORT CAVAZOS, TEXAS 76544-4752

MCHB-PHA-HBF

27 July 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander, Headquarters Support Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army North (Fifth Army), Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234-7000

SUBJECT: Retirement of Military Working Equid Elia

1. Elia is 9 year old dark bay Percheron gelding. He was acquired in May 2021 for use as a wheel horse. During his training, Elia bucked riders on several occasions. During his 2 years at Fort Sam Houston, Elia is classified as unsafe and unsuitable to ride.

2. Elia has been diagnosed with overriding dorsal spinous processes, or “kissing spine,” in his thoracic vertebrae. While it is a mild case, the weight of riders and training saddles at times causes his dorsal spinous process to touch or nearly touch the adjacent dorsal spinous process and causes sharp, unexpected pain which causes him to bolt or buck. Elia has also been diagnosed with a cataract in his right eye causing him to have sight issues. Horses manifest varying degrees of blindness as cataracts mature. His may have been caused due to injury. The majority of cataracts in horses occur in adult animals. They most commonly develop secondary to diseases that cause intraocular inflammation, such as Equine Recurrent Uveitis (ERU, moon blindness). The second most common cause of equine cataract is trauma – both blunt and sharp trauma.

3. Elia should be retired and declared excess for the Caisson Section for the two reasons stated above. Treatment consists of surgical interventions, either by shaving the bone of the spinous process and clipping the associated ligaments, or by interspinous ligament desmotomy where only the ligaments connected to the affected spinous processes are cut. Either treatment is highly invasive and requires weeks to months of dedicated rehabilitation by specialized or trained personnel.

4. Elia could be a great stable mate or in a situation where he would have limited exposure to a herd of horses. With time, and possibly treatment, he could be a comfortable horse under modern light saddles and with a smaller rider to train and ride. He is current for all vaccinations and Coggins test.

3. The point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at (210) 808-6101 or [chelsea.n.rivera4.mil@health.mil](mailto:chelsea.n.rivera4.mil@health.mil).

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