

**WHEN
HORSE
SLAUGHTER
COMES
TO TOWN**

INT'L FUND FOR HORSES

SPECIAL REPORT

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Part 1: Environmental Impact

Noxious drugs are not only present in the meat intended for human consumption overseas but also in the waste water and sludge produced during processing.

HISTORICALLY, the negative environmental impact of horse slaughter plants has been well documented.

In 2007, all three of the foreign owned horse slaughter plants in the United States were shut down under Texas and Illinois state laws. The two Texas based plants, Beltex in Dallas and Dallas Crown in Kaufman, were closed in February when the 5th District court ruled that a 1949 law against selling horse meat was valid and in force. The remaining plant, Cavel International in DeKalb, Illinois, closed in mid-September of the same year under a new state law making horse slaughter illegal.^[1]

It was community administrators and local residents who actively petitioned to have horse slaughter plants shut, citing the extreme disregard for the welfare of the people and locales where they existed as well as the merciless suffering of the horses sent to them.

Numerous Violations Plague Communities

All three horse slaughter plants amassed numerous environmental violations and overwhelmed the waste water infrastructures due to dumping of blood, entrails, urine, feces, heads and hooves.

The Dallas Crown horse slaughter facility had been in operation in Kaufman since the late 70's and from the beginning had caused problems both economically and environmentally. "The slaughterhouse constantly flooded the town's drinking water with blood and tissue – literally coming out of the taps – and had never complied with city water standards, or paid fines."^[2]

Furthermore, in May 2002, the City noted that another public health hazard "was the vector attraction due to bones and horseflesh falling off your bone trailer" and that "dogs were carrying the bones into the community."^[3]

In fact, in an open letter to state legislators considering pro-horse slaughter resolutions, the town's mayor at the time, Paula Bacon, referenced Public Works reports regarding effluent and waste water violations "decaying meat [which] provides a foul odor and is an attraction for vermin and carrion," containers conveyed "uncovered and leaking liquids," there are "significant foul odors during the daily monitoring of the area," and "Dallas Crown continually neglects to perform within the standards required of them."^[4]

Beltex was a Texas Corporation with European shareholders that had been slaughtering horses for human consumption for 27 years.



As with Dallas Crown, Beltex had a non-unionized workforce. OSHA records revealed that since the plants' inception in 1977 until its last inspection in 1997, Beltex had committed 29 violations of which 28 were deemed serious. OSHA records show that an ammonia leak occurred in 1996, but no one (fortunately) died or was permanently disabled. In 2000 the facility "accidentally pumped blood into the creek" and "in 2001, they were notified that waste water was flowing into adjacent properties and into the creek."^[5]

Of particular note, the Sanitation Group of DeKalb, Illinois, where Cavel International was located, identified the incomparable hazard associated with the discharge from horse slaughter facilities.

"This hazard is uniquely acute for horse slaughter because of the wide range of drugs given to horses that are clearly labeled NOT FOR USE IN HORSES INTENDED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION."^[6]

These noxious drugs are not only present in the meat intended for human consumption overseas but also in the waste water and sludge produced during processing. This runoff has the potential to contaminate down-stream water intakes, including groundwater used for human consumption, and can enter the food chain via sludge distribution on crops.

Unlike the aforementioned, decades old horse slaughter plants in Texas, Cavel International in Illinois was a sparkling new, purpose built facility that re-opened in June, 2004 with a state-of-the-art pre-treatment system.

Additionally, Cavel International had special Industrial Waste Permits that allowed much higher (8 times higher) contamination levels for waste water leaving the slaughter house. But Cavel was still out of compliance, and not just a few times. This facility was in significant non-compliance hundreds of times. In one report, a Cavel employee acknowledges "chunks" from slaughtered horses were oozing out of tanks. This does not include the numerous safety violations documented by the FSIS.^[7]

As a final point, these practices and findings are not limited to the US.

In Canada, Natural Valley Farms in Neudorf, Saskatchewan, was shut down by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in 2009 for food safety concerns. NVF went into receivership on September 22, 2008, yet horses continued to be slaughtered at the facility by Velda Group, an international Belgian-based company. Velda was infamous in Illinois for numerous environmental charges and convictions at their Cavel International horse slaughter plant that closed business in September 2007.^[8]

"Blood disposal appears to have been equally problematic for NVF as with other horse slaughter plants. Not only do horses have twice the quantity of blood as cows, but the blood is notoriously difficult to treat. The bacterial agents used in standard cattle digesters fail to provide acceptable discharge levels because of



antibiotics often found in horse blood. As a result, pollution follows the horse slaughter industry where ever it goes."^[9]

Former mayor of Kaufman, Paula Bacon, comments "In Canada they have apparently become even more blatant, dumping huge untreated piles of entrails onto open ground and even using a tanker truck to discharge blood and refuse into a local river."^[10]

In any case, the negative environmental impacts and the chronic inability of the facilities to comply with local laws pertaining to waste management and air and water quality far outweigh any benefits.

This quote by Henry Skjerven, an investor and former director of NVF, sums it up: "Natural Valley Farms died the day the decision makers chose to kill horses"^[11]

Environmental issues continue to plague the horse slaughter industry. On December 3, 2010, the Bouvry Exports horse slaughter plant in Fort MacLeod, Alberta closed operations to complete renovations related to sanitation.^[12]

Part 2: Economic Growth, Employment and Community Welfare

Horse slaughter facilities are economically insignificant for the communities in which they are situated.

CONTRARY to what some pro-horse slaughter proponents say, horse slaughter facilities trigger negative economic growth for the communities in which they are situated. This is far-reaching and insidious. The USDA states that profits from horse slaughter are negligible. "It is entirely foreign owned, and pays no corporate taxes or export tariffs. The horse slaughter industry is economically insignificant."^[1]

Comments from Paula Bacon, former Mayor of Kaufman, Texas, home of Dallas Crown, elucidate the issues. Bacon was vigilant in underscoring the operation's copious environmental violations and subsequent negative impact upon the community including an increase in the number of illegal and minority workers, low paying jobs, offensive odors, property devaluation, strains on local infrastructure and crime among others. Persistent and tireless lobbying against the plant in support of the health and welfare of the community as well as the horses finally lead to the unanimous decision by the City's judicial board to close the plant.

"Dallas Crown had a negative effect on the development of surrounding properties, and a horse slaughter plant is a stigma to the development of our city generally" "the corporations involved in this industry have consistently proven themselves to be the worst possible corporate citizens" "the industry caused significant and long term hardship to my community.

"During this time, I learned that an estimated \$5 million in Federal funding was being spent annually to support three foreign-owned horse slaughter plants! And



when the Dallas Crown tax records were exposed in the city's legal struggle, we found that they had paid only \$5 in federal taxes on a gross income of over \$12,000,000!

"The more I learn about horse slaughter, the more certain I am: There is no justification for horse slaughter in this country. My city was little more than a doormat for a foreign-owned business that drained our resources, thwarted economic development and stigmatized our community. Americans don't eat horses, and we don't raise them for human consumption. There is no justification for spending American tax dollars to support this industry at the expense of Americans and our horses."^[2]

Dallas Crown had numerous, repeated and unresolved violations to their industrial waste permit – denying the City access to their property for waste water testing despite requirement by city ordinance, city permit agreement, and court order as well as overloading the waste water treatment plant capacity among other serious infractions. Furthermore, in order to accommodate the water generated by the operation, city staff reported that a \$6 million upgrade would be required even though it had been financed to last through to 2015.^[3]

As with the Dallas Crown Corporation, foreign-owned slaughterhouses formerly in operation paid little to no taxes to the communities where they existed. Any profits were repatriated to European owners who garnered significant benefits through the inexpensive purchase of American horses by "killer buyers" at livestock auctions; horse meat sells for \$20 /lb or more in most foreign countries.

Furthermore, given that agricultural production represents 1.2% of the GDP and only 0.6% of employment nation-wide, building a horse slaughter facility has no significant impact on economic growth but simply serves to whet the palates of European and Asian epicureans.^[4]

Many horse slaughter plants employ illegal immigrants and ex-felons who have committed violent crimes. The farmed-animal industry, horse slaughter included, deliberately recruits immigrants because they will accept low wages and can be easily manipulated for fear of losing their jobs.^[5] Their willingness to accept low wages has the potential to drive down wages in areas where this industry operates.

Furthermore, animal processing facilities are one of the most dangerous places in America to work. According to statistics from the US Department of Labor, nearly one in three slaughterhouse workers suffers from illness or injury, compared to one in 10 workers in other manufacturing jobs.

That said several studies show that "more than half of the country's estimated 12 million illegal immigrants are uninsured (out of a total of 47 million uninsured people in the US) and thus likely to use emergency rooms that treat everyone regardless of ability to pay."^[6] This has the capacity to put a large strain on local government budgets and



potentially lead to significant compensation claims that could deplete state resources.

What's more, the social consequences endured by several towns in the mid-west that have supported such industries are appalling.

According to researcher Amy Fitzgerald, "current statistics on whether slaughterhouses make good neighbors are a fait accompli. The documented crime increases include a 130% increase in violent crimes in Finney County, Kansas (Broadway 2000) and a 63% increase in monthly police bookings in Lexington, Nebraska (Gouveia and Stull 1995). Increases in crime have also been observed in at least one Canadian town to date: the town of Brooks, Alberta witnessed a 70% increase in reported crime."^[7]

Regardless of what pro-slaughter groups claim, the evidence is unmistakable.

"Low paying wages, increased haphazard populations without stable economic anchors, split up families, and the uneducated unskilled labor force, are not the kinds of dividends any community needs. Cranking up horse slaughter plants in times of economic necessity shows about as much ingenuity as legalizing bordellos. The cure is worse than the disease."^[8]

When compared to other dirty, low paying jobs experts portray the industry as uniquely different in terms of spawning societal chaos "Dis-confirming those theories and finding unique effects of slaughterhouse employment would point to the alternative hypothesis as a possible explanation: that the type of work undertaken in slaughterhouses contributes to the social disruption observed."^[9]

Research by Anderson, Patterson and Spiegel corroborates this hypothesis.

Unlike other low-paying routinely dangerous industrial jobs, they advise that slaughterhouses are fundamentally atypical. That is, "the correlation between dismembering animals and victimization of less powerful human groups such as women and children is clear and bears itself out in increased domestic violence in communities surrounding slaughterhouses."^[10]

Part 3: Legal Implications

Legislation and government oversight activities have failed to protect horses from the cruelties inherent to slaughter or toxic horse meat from entering the human food chain.

LEGISLATION banning the domestic slaughter and export for slaughter of American horses for human consumption has a long history, and continues to be pursued at both the State and Federal levels.

The first legislative action banning horse slaughter and the export for slaughter began at the state level in 1998 in California when Proposition 6 passed with nearly 5 million voters approving the measure.



The first legislative action banning horse slaughter and the export for slaughter began at the federal level in 2001 in the 107th Congress. Similar bills have been re-introduced in successive Congresses since then, including the current one. None of these bills have been successful, blocked in various Committees.^[1]

Legislation to ban horse slaughter and export for slaughter is lobbied against vigorously by powerful factions of the animal agriculture industry. It is just as vigorously lobbied for by a strong majority of constituents seeking to bring the slaughter of horses to an end.

Success at the State Level

The slaughter of horses for human consumption finally ended on US soil when laws were enacted at the state level shutting the three remaining plants – Beltex and Dallas Crown in Texas and Cavel International in Illinois – in 2007. These laws, however, do not prevent the live export of horses for slaughter.

Success at the Federal Level

Funding for USDA Inspections Cut from the Federal Budget

During the 109th Congress, sponsors of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503/S. 311) successfully sought enactment of a rider in the Agriculture budget bill denying funding for USDA inspections of horse slaughtering operations under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. §§ 601 *et seq.*). Such inspections are required for the marketing of meat considered fit for human consumption, including horse meat.

The funding prohibition was originally enacted in 2005 as part of the FY2006 Agriculture Appropriations Act. However, the USDA responded by adopting new rules that allowed the slaughterhouses to pay for the inspections themselves. A 2007 court ruling ordered the USDA to stop these inspections, thereby ending the possibility of horse slaughter.^[2]

This USDA defunding measure was continued in the Agriculture Appropriations Bill for each following fiscal year until FY2012. See more below.

Funding for Necessary Inspections Sought by States

Following the federal funding cuts for USDA horse slaughter inspections, state legislators began introducing bills to pave the way for the return of horse slaughter to US soil at the urging of the pro-horse slaughter lobby. Their goal was to find a way to bypass federal law by creating their own state horse meat inspection programs.

Federal agriculture officials called that presumption into question, stating that the restrictions that ban USDA inspectors from overseeing the killing and processing of horses also apply to all state inspection programs.



"There is no possibility under the current law for a state-inspected meat plant to ship any meat, interstate or internationally, for human consumption," said USDA spokesman Neil Gaffney.^[3]

Thwarted at the state level, the pro-horse slaughter lobby returned to Washington to seek what they wanted.

Federal Funding for Inspections Reinstated

The spending cut for USDA inspections necessary to export horse meat for human consumption came to an abrupt halt in 2011 when President Obama signed the Agricultural Appropriations Bill for FY2012 into law. The provision was removed, reinstated and removed again from the bill in Committee by Tea Party Republicans using the "closed door session" trick at the behest of the horse slaughter lobby.^[4]

However, the Agriculture Appropriations bill did not allocate any new spending to pay for horse meat inspections which opponents claim would cost taxpayers \$3 million to \$5 million a year. In order to pay for these inspections, the USDA would be forced to find the money in its existing budget at a time when Congress and the White House are constantly seeking ways to reduce federal spending.

The fiscal year for the Agriculture Appropriations bill ends September 30, 2012. Legislators favoring a ban on horse slaughter are determined to see the funding for USDA inspections necessary to export horse meat for human consumption cut once again for the next fiscal year. There is every reason to believe they will be successful.

Live Export of Horses for Slaughter Continues

It is important to note that none of the legislative activities cited above ended the live export of American horses across US borders for the purposes of slaughter but increased it dramatically. Latest government reports show that approximately 150,000 American horses are killed each year in Mexico and Canada, virtually the same number as when plants were in operation on US soil. This includes live export of young horses to Japan to be slaughtered for their meat.

Other Federal Activity

GAO Report

On June 22, 2011 the long-awaited United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report^[5] requested by the Senate Appropriations Committee in 2010 was released for public scrutiny. The GAO was asked to investigate and report on any inadvertent consequences that arose as a result of the cessation of horse slaughter on US soil in 2007. (i.e. the effect on the market, market changes on various organizations and challenges in the transport and welfare of US horses exported for slaughter).



By all accounts the first intimation of deceitfulness, later confirmed, evolved with a statement made by paid horse slaughter/meat packing lobbyist Charles Stenholm months before its release that alluded to the fact that the findings of the GAO survey would be favorable from a pro-slaughter perspective.^[6]

While the way the information was gathered and whom it was gathered from is disturbing, the most important aspect of the GAO report is its recommendations. The GAO's principle recommendation was:

"Congress may wish to consider instituting an explicit ban on the domestic slaughter of horses and export of U.S. horses intended for slaughter in foreign countries."

The GAO's secondary recommendation was:

". . . that Congress may wish to reconsider restrictions on the use of federal funds to inspect horses for slaughter".

Although these two recommendations are contradictory in nature, it is important to note that the GAO's principle recommendation is to institute an "explicit ban" on the slaughter and export for slaughter of American horses. This was based on the conclusion that the USDA did not conduct their monitoring duties properly.

The GAO's second recommendation was to restore the USDA inspections necessary to export horse meat. This would potentially open the door to the return of horse slaughter in the U.S. This has not turned out to be so, not is it ever likely.

FDA Petitioned to Remove Horses from Human Food Chain

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is being petitioned to prevent former companion, working and competition horses from entering the human food chain.

Front Range Equine Rescue and The Humane Society of the United States say the FDA does not adequately regulate what they describe as potentially toxic meat from these sources. Their petition says some drugs given to these horses throughout their lives are banned by the FDA because of their risks to humans.

“Using these horses for human consumption creates an unacceptable and illegal public health threat under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act,” the groups said.

The petition requests that the FDA certify all horses and horse meat from American horses as “unqualified” for human consumption. If successful, this will end the slaughter of American horses for human consumption.^[7]



European Sanctions Regarding American Horse Meat

EU Quarantine of American Slaughter Horses Bound for Canada

Apart from the obvious legal ramifications in North America, there is yet another reason to avoid re-opening horse slaughtering facilities.

In 2009, the Int'l Fund for Horses began alerting the European Parliament of the fact that "horse meat exported from North America to EU member countries where it is eaten, is adulterated because of the presence of Bute^[8] and other prohibited medications routinely given to horses in the United States and Canada."^[9]

The Int'l Fund for Horses were proven justified in doing so.

Decades of USDA studies asserting Canadian horse meat is chemically harmless have been branded bogus by a new peer reviewed scientific study. The paper, titled "Association of Phenylbutazone Usage With Horses Bought for Slaughter: A Public Health Risk" appeared in the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology.^[10]

This study questions USDA and CFIA horse meat testing capabilities. USDA and CFIA programs have consistently given horse meat exported for the dinner tables of Europe and other destinations a clean bill of health despite containing residues of Bute and scores of other dangerous chemicals potentially toxic to humans.

The EU responded with a new directive that equines from North America must be quarantined for a period of six months prior to slaughter for human consumption. Equine owners would now be required to record medical conditions and treatment history if they intend to present their horses for slaughter for human consumption.

The required records are in the form of an Equine Information Document (EID) that must be presented for each equine processed for edible purposes in a CFIA inspected processing facility start on July 31, 2010 forward.^[11] This rigorous enforcement of food safety regulations closely follows the current regime in Europe wherein EU countries use a "passport system" for slaughter animals that serves to document what substances animals have received over their lifetimes with the purpose of banning meat tainted by drugs. In the instance of horses, this would include those commonly given to horses, such as antibiotics, wormers and Bute, among others.^[12]

Any country that intends to export food animals to the EU must have proper documentation and procedures in place that parallel those in the EU.^[13]

The Int'l Fund for Horses, unhappy with the CFIA's response to the EU directive states:

"The CFIA have devised a system of merely reporting horse health histories, instead of quarantining them, as ordered by the European Union's recent directive regarding slaughter horses in North America.



" Moreover, in 2007, a Wisconsin woman "has been fined for selling horses without testing them for disease and forging documents claiming the tests had been done." Although this took place before the EU mandate, this is an obvious warning that the CFIA cannot rely on the integrity of its Equine Information Document."^[14]

In an interview with Henry Skjerven, a former director of the Natural Valley Farms slaughter plant in Saskatchewan, Canada, the truth behind horse slaughter becomes apparent:

"Unfortunately, North America, and Canada, were never geared for raising horses for food consumption. The system as it stood when we were killing horses was in no way, shape or form, safe, in my opinion."

Skjerven states further:

"We did not know where those horses were coming from, what might be in them or what they were treated with. I was always in fear - I think that it was very valid - that we were going to send something across there [to the EU] and we were simply going to get our doors locked after we had some kind of issue with the product."^[15]

Implementation and Enforcement of EU Sanctions

Since the execution of the new EU directive in Canada as of July 31, 2010, the enforcement of these new regulations appears to be comparatively lax.

The flow of horses across the border from US livestock auctions and killer buyers to Canada has not waned, nor has anything been reported on refusal of loads at the slaughter plants. Seemingly then, the EU continues to import drug-tainted horse meat.

Over 50% of the horses slaughtered in Canada for human consumption come from the US. Most, if not all, have received many of the drugs banned from the food chain and will not be quarantined for the requisite time frame for these drugs to have been eliminated from their systems.

In particular, Bute is administered on a regular basis to relieve pain, particularly in sport horses, and is inappropriately likened to the term "aspirin". In fact, any animal that receives Bute is banned from ever entering the food chain as it is a known carcinogen thereby completely eliminating them from human consumption.

Even more alarming, some kill buyers have indicated that they are unconcerned about the new regulations and will simply falsify the required Equine Information Document (EID) paperwork themselves. This is a common occurrence for other test certificates



(e.g. Coggins) which are routinely anecdotal. The question then remains. How will the CFIA and EU regulators verify compliance?

Canadian Horse Defence Coalition Investigation

In early December 2011, the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition (CHDC) released footage and photos obtained by an anonymous source at Les Viandes de la Petite-Nation in St. Andre-Avallon, Quebec.^[16] This is the third such investigation in recent years at other Canadian slaughterhouses that has uncovered countless problems relating to both animal welfare and fraudulent documentation regarding the drug history of horses sold to slaughter.

Alarming from a food safety perspective and compliance with the EID regulations was the disturbing inconsistencies and missing information on the EID forms where all documents examined revealed omissions to varying degrees. This ranged from incomplete owner/agent information to several instances where the accompanying photographs failed to match that of the horse. Moreover, it was found that as many or more than six were racehorses, one of which had competed just three months prior to slaughter. This is in complete violation of the EU and Canadian regulations given that undeniably these horses were administered Bute which unquestionably identifies the fraudulent practices conducted by the CFIA.

Not only were there glaring inconsistencies in documentation but the anonymously-captured footage revealed inhumane stunning practices that failed to render at least 40% of the horses immediately unconscious with some still alive during the slaughter process. In one extremely disturbing scene, a large Belgian horse received an unbelievable 11 stunning attempts.

In any case what is unfathomable is that the CFIA persist in contributing to heightened food safety risks while allowing the importation of US horses without proper documentation. Indeed, how can this continue, especially in light of the stringent new regulations that are to be implemented by 2013?^[17]

EU Inspection of Mexican Horse Slaughter Plants

In May of 2011 a report was released by the European Commission Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) regarding inspections of EU regulated plants in Mexico slaughtering horses for human consumption during the latter part of 2010.^[18]

The objective of the FVO was to verify the consistency and accuracy of meeting EU requirements for importing horse meat for human consumption.

In the report filed by the FVO a number of serious infractions and actions taken were cited. Some of these violations that failed to meet EU regulations included; hygiene and water quality provided for the horses, non-traceable carcasses some of which were in contact with EU eligible horse meat, presence of EU prohibited drug residues, falsified



sworn statements regarding veterinary medical treatment histories including cases of positive results for EU prohibited drug residues; as well as the transportation of horses in advanced stages of pregnancy, with health problems or illness that were rejected at the border.

No doubt if similar inspections were conducted in Canada the same findings would prevail. It is beyond comprehension how these fraudulent practices continue particularly in light of the serious implications of food safety for human consumption and is nothing more than criminal.

Introduction of Enhanced EU Sanctions

While the current system may be inadequately implemented, this initiative is only the first in a series of new regulations that by 2013 are expected to generate an electronic database with full medical histories wherein the EID is to be an implanted microchip in each and every horse destined for slaughter. Any horses flagged for banned substances will be considered ineligible.

How then will the current enforcement of these regulations develop to guarantee this happens? It is doubtful they will comply or adopt any formal procedures to provide sufficient information for the completion of a Canadian EID.

Collapse of Horse Meat Market Anticipated

The market for North American horse meat may be on the verge of collapse.

Many European importers have promised customers that they will no longer purchase horse meat from the North American supply chain. This stems in part from the realization of the extreme cruelty of the slaughter pipeline in North America and Mexico, as exposed by GAIA, a respected animal welfare in Belgium, and Animals' Angels USA,^[19] together with the growing awareness that horses in North America are not subject to the restrictions that apply to traditional food animals and have been administered otherwise forbidden drugs.

Canadian Legislation to Ban Horse Slaughter

Additionally, Canada tabled first time legislation banning horse slaughter.

On June 16, 2010, Canadian Parliament by MP Alex Atamanenko (NDP Agriculture Critic) tabled a Private Member's Bill, C-544^[20], banning the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

The underlying basis of the bill is directly related to food safety as horses in North America are not primarily raised for human consumption.^[21] Moreover, it is an explicit response to the current EU regulations given that the majority of slaughter-bound horses cannot be in compliance with the EU quarantine mandate due to enforcement



failures.

C-544 did not advance before the Session adjourned. However, thousands of signatures were gathered on petitions in nearly every province. On October 5, 2011 the bill was re-introduced as Bill C-322^[22] in the current session and the signed petitions carried forward. The bill currently sits in its first reading in the House of Commons.

Part 4. Opposition to Horse Slaughter

There will always be animal welfare groups, advocates and horse loving citizens diligently working to bring a complete end to horse slaughter.

Formal and Informal Polls

State and nationwide polls show that the greater part of the American population is strongly opposed to horse slaughter. Some examples are:

1995: A national call in television poll resulted in 93% of callers demanding that "the killing of horses for meat be banned."

1997: A state-wide poll taken in California revealed that 88% of those questioned were opposed to horse slaughter.

1999: A poll conducted in New York State yielded the following results:

- 91% considered horses companions, recreational or sporting animals
- 72% would never eat horse meat
- 73% believed that the manner that horses are slaughtered is cruel and inhumane
- 81% personally opposed the practice of horse slaughter.^[1]

2012: In February 2012, The American Society for the Protection of Animals announced the results of a poll conducted by Lake Research Partners revealing that 80 percent of American voters are opposed to the slaughter of horses for human consumption. The nationwide survey reveals that Americans oppose horse slaughter overwhelmingly regardless of their gender, political affiliation, whether they live in an urban or rural area, or their geographic location. Further, it confirms that a vast majority of horse owners are also against the slaughtering of our nation's equines.^[2]

Documented Cruelty

There are countless reasons to oppose horse slaughter taken from citations of information presented during hearings on anti-horse slaughter legislation. The following are two of the many accounts of the horse slaughter industry.

1. Testimony



Liz Ross, federal policy adviser to the Animal Welfare Institute in Washington, D.C., testifying before a Congressional Subcommittee, states:

"Dozens of horses were already in the kill-pens destined for slaughter. Of those horses that went through the auction ring I was able to purchase three, all of whom undoubtedly would have otherwise gone to slaughter. One was in such bad shape that she should have never been brought through the ring and we had her euthanized on the spot. The other two were placed at an equine rescue facility in New Jersey where they still live today.

"The pure animal suffering and terror I witnessed that day at New Holland was . . . fundamentally disturbing as was everything I subsequently learned about the horse slaughter industry.

"In slaughter, horses suffer long before they reach the slaughterhouse. Crammed onto double deck trailers designed for cattle and sheep, horses travel in a bent manner for more than twenty-four hours without food, water or rest. In fact, so paltry are current regulations and so brutal is the trade that heavily pregnant mares, blind horses and those with broken limbs are regularly sent to slaughter.

"It is also noteworthy that in Mexico the captive-bolt gun is often passed over in preference to the 'puntilla' knife which is used to stab the horse in the spinal cord to the point of paralysis before the animal is strung up and quartered, often while still alive. In fact, one of the Mexican plants that was the subject of an undercover investigation exposing this horrific practice employs lobbyists who work the halls of Congress to defeat this bill. Mr. Chairman, this is pure animal cruelty, through and through, and it must end."^[3]

Testifying before Congress, Dr. Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, Professor, Section Head and Program Director of the Animal Behavior Department of Clinical Sciences at Tufts' Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in North Grafton, Massachusetts, states:

"Horse slaughter has never been considered by veterinary professionals to be a form of euthanasia. Congress and the general public must hear from veterinarians that horse slaughter is not and should not be equated with humane euthanasia. Rather, the slaughtering of horses is a brutal and predatory business One need only observe horse slaughter to see that it is a far cry from genuine humane euthanasia."^[4]

2. Video Documentation

Horrors of the carnage that takes place inside Canadian horse slaughter plants is well documented.



The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition (CHDC) released video footage in two horse slaughter facilities, Bouvry Exports (Fort MacLeod, ALTA) and Viandes Richelieu (Massueville, PQ), taken in February, 2010.

Both of these videos exposed practices that fail to meet humane slaughter standards used by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to audit Canadian slaughterhouses. These plants are clearly mismanaged and even in the presence of CFIA inspectors, abuse prevails.

A statement from the World Society for the Protection for Animals describes the tragic scenario.

"It is clear that neither the facilities nor the behavior of the personnel shown are suited to the humane slaughter of horses, and that extreme suffering results for many individual animals. Problems include failure to restrain each animal's head properly before shooting, shooting from too great a distance, shooting in the wrong part of the head or body, failure to follow up with an immediate second shot in animals that were not killed by the first, hoisting apparently conscious animals, and - in the case of the Richelieu plant - cruel handling and treatment of the horses, including excessive whipping and overuse of an electric prod as well as an apparent callous disregard for the animals' suffering. An additional cause of very major concern is the presence of what appear to be either plant supervisors or inspectors who observe the employees' actions and yet do nothing."^[5]

Dr. Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, states:

"Noise, blood and suffering is what you get at the Bouvry equine slaughter plant: Horses kicking after they have been shot, sinking down and rising up; sometimes periods of struggling or paddling before a second or third shot has to be administered. This atrocity goes against all veterinary guidelines for humane euthanasia.

Terror and suffering is the rule at this equine house of horrors ... and all in the name of the gourmet meat market."^[6]

This sweeping investigation stirred much controversy and outrage with the public especially after the CFIA when confronted with the violations of their own regulations, found no major deficiencies, or intent of abuse toward the horses. Even the Calgary RCMP who probed the allegations acquiesced to this ruling. Based on this video documentation, it seems surreal that the RCMP could find no evidence of cruelty.

The public in both Canada and the US were appalled by the government's apathetic reaction to this situation given that this was the second time in two years that undercover footage of horse slaughter operations in Canada revealed horrific and inhumane treatment of slaughter horses.



Grassroots Movement Against Horse Slaughter

There will always be animal welfare groups, advocates and horse loving citizens constantly working to bring a total end to the slaughter of this beloved equine. These groups of individuals work tirelessly to recruit their friends, families and colleagues to the anti-horse slaughter movement, urging them to rise up against the brutal practice of horse slaughter.

Laura Allen of the Animal Law Coalition states:

"Horse slaughter is nothing more than abuse and it is being inflicted upon an animal that has never historically been considered a food animal, but rather a working partner and friend to man. An animal used primarily for pleasure, work, recreation and sport. The lies of the horse slaughterers can't stand up to the graphic footage of the realities."^[7]

With increasing participation in social media networks, it is faster and easier than ever to source the latest information concerning horse slaughter, share it immediately with others, and mobilize tens of thousands to take action within a matter of days or hours.

Take for example the following recent events:

Attorney Cynthia MacPherson and local citizens basically ran Unified Equine out of town when the group attempted to bring a horse slaughter plant to the Mountain Grove area of Missouri, protesting against it at local organizational meetings, at one point booing the banker when he tried to speak.^[8] Area horse lovers also created a Facebook page, Missourians Against Horse Slaughter, and launched an online nationwide petition at Change.org that had 14,258 signatures as of this writing.^[9]

Additionally, in a letter to Unified Equine's attorney of record MacPherson challenged the way the organization solicited investors for the project, risking \$6M of taxpayer dollars if they failed.^[10] The letter went viral within minutes. The response of the local community was swift and effective. Although they denied it, Unified Equine was forced to look for another location for their horse slaughter facility.

Part 5: Alternatives to Horse Slaughter

Slaughter is a useless as a tool for controlling the unwanted horse population.

WITH the devastated economy, its slow recovery and the closure of all horse slaughter facilities in the US, pro-slaughter groups want you to believe there is no alternative. A study examining horse slaughter trends in the United States, Canada and Mexico carried out by researchers in conjunction with Animal Law Coalition shows otherwise.

Backed by data from the United States Dept of Agriculture, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other government and private



sources, the conclusion was that the demand for horse meat is controlled by foreign markets rather than a surplus of unwanted horses. Europeans and Asians regard horse meat as a delicacy.^[1]

John Holland, senior analyst for AAHS (Americans Against Horse Slaughter) explains:

"Slaughter is useless as a tool for controlling the unwanted horse population and instead simply creates a market that competes with potential buyers of horses and encourages a continuous supply.

"The trends are irrefutable. We found that equine abuse levels are clearly linked to economic conditions but that slaughter trends were antithetical to them for most of the study period.

"The demand for horse meat creates a market where horse slaughter 'kill buyers' compete with other people who want to buy horses. This encourages owners to supply that market through over-breeding horses, for example."^[2]

Essentially what this implies is that if horse slaughter for human consumption and export to Mexico and Canada for the purposes of slaughter is, then there will be no incentive for these individuals, and the markets will turn elsewhere to find their meat.

Holland goes on to say:

"Those demanding horse meat would simply look to other countries for horses. The study also shows that the market has quickly adjusted to large decreases in slaughter in the past, indicating that there would be no significant or sustained increase in unwanted or abandoned horses."^[3]

To further support this premise, the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), an organization that is pro-horse slaughter, accounts for more than half of all horses going to slaughter. Astoundingly, the AQHA encourages breeders to breed without consideration so the surplus continues. "Many are culls which breeders were unable to sell."

In a slanted survey undertaken by the pro-slaughter American Horse Council and Unwanted Horse Coalition, remarkably, only 30% of these "stakeholders" thought this was contributing to overpopulation and neglect.^[4] It is important to note that no anti-slaughter groups or individuals were invited to participate in this survey.

R.T. Fitch, author of "Pro-Slaughter Group Issues Tainted Survey Results," comments:

"Americans should be outraged that Congress allows needed legislation to languish and continually be blocked and stalled by special interest groups that perpetuate the over breeding of horses."^[5]



Simply stated, if there is no easy way to dispose of unwanted horses, fewer horses will be bred.

Moreover, Dr. Patricia Hogan, DVM, ACVS, a veterinary surgeon and AAEP member states:

"If we want to be 'part of the solution,' then we truly need to examine our role in the problem, and actually put our own house in order. Put some 'teeth' into our bite. But that commitment needs to come from within our own circle before we can expect our advice to be heeded by other factions within the racing industry. If we had been truly living by the mantra of 'putting the horse first,' many of the issues we are facing today would simply not exist. United we stand, divided we fall. That statement has never been more true for horse racing; and for the veterinary community supporting it."^[6]

It is a given fact that the depressed economy is making it harder for some horse owners and breeders to adequately care for their animals. Yet this is no reason to re-introduce a practice morally and socially unacceptable that is rife with unspeakable abuse, adding nothing to the economy and overwhelming the environment around it. These so-called "unwanted horses" ... "are a serious problem and so broad it impacts the entire United States, not just the horse racing industry. Perhaps it's time for a wake-up call." says Tom LaMarra in an article posted in 2008 by Bloodhorse.com.^[7]

The pro-horse slaughter AQHA continue to encourage rampant over breeding of horses, complain about how many "unwanted horses" there are, then reportedly lobby to defeat federal legislation banning horse slaughter and pass state resolutions to bring back horse slaughter back to the US.

Yet the ruse continues as shown in this statement by Tom Persechino, senior director of marketing; "it's not practical to force breeders to limit the number of horses they breed, but it is feasible to educate them. He said the Unwanted Horse Coalition "believes teaching people to own responsibly will help lower the number of unwanted horses."^[8]

Even so, there are movements within the horse industry to address the surplus horse dilemma.

These strategies are aimed at reducing the number of unwanted horses on the front end through responsible breeding, and on the rear end through rescue/retirement facilities, retraining for alternative careers, and low-cost euthanasia options.

The main objective of these policies is to improve the quality of life of unwanted horses and to reduce their numbers. Or are they?

The horse industry has among them "do-gooder" organizations such as the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), the American Veterinarian Medical Association (AVMA), the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), the American Horse



Council (AHC), and the Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC) among others, and a new group called the Equine Health and Welfare Alliance (EHWA).

And what do all of these organizations have in common? They are all pro-horse slaughter.

Masked behind policies designed to have you believe that they are looking to "focus solely on issues and mechanisms that protect, promote and preserve adequate humane measures of basic needs for the horse" lurks the specter of their final solution, death in a slaughterhouse.

As Economics Professor Dr. Caroline Betts, PhD cleverly points out in her article, "The economic reality of scarce and toxic horses":

"I was not surprised that Dr Tom Lenz, past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, readily credited the organization for coining the phrase 'Unwanted Horse' in his article 'The Unwanted Horse in the United States – International Implications'

"It is a coup d'etat of language choice for those American equine practitioners lobbying hardest to maintain a U.S. export market for horse meat. Dr Lenz manages to equate 'unwanted' with 'slaughtered for human consumption' and with 'should be slaughtered for human consumption, but aren't, because we need additional slaughter plants on American soil.

"Horses slaughtered are neither privately nor socially 'unwanted,' for they command a positive price both at auction and at the slaughter plant gate - and I suspect that if they did not, we would not be having this debate at all. As any Economics 101 student can tell you, positive prices signal not 'unwanted-ness,' but scarcity."^[9]

Dr. Betts concludes:

"The flesh of 'unwanted horses' is acknowledged to be toxic when consumed by humans. And who among the politicians, equine practitioners, and veterinarians lobbying to prevent a ban on the slaughter of American horses - in the name of equine welfare - would wish to be responsible for the deleterious impact for human welfare associated with promoting the slaughter of toxic horses?"^[10]

In a letter to the editor of HorseBack Magazine, Dr. Betts proposes some reforms:

"Why, instead, aren't these states considering the establishment of temporary state funded horse rescues, with jobs in them that provide tax revenue, until the economy recovers and the horses can find homes? Why aren't they providing additional funding and jobs for Humane Societies and Animal Control agencies to cope with whatever is being claimed that they are having to deal with? Why not



do something that BENEFITS HORSES as well as creating some jobs? And why not impose a state tax on horse breeders to help fund it all?"^[11]

In an article entitled "Stop Horse Slaughter: Is There Another Solution?" the author suggests we should enforce laws or rules that govern the ownership of a horse or horses.

"Maybe we should be required to obtain a license for breeding horses. Maybe we should put limits on how many horses may be bred a year. Maybe we should have to be licensed to own a horse just like we have to be licensed to drive a car or to go hunting. With horse ownership, and even breeding ability, open to just anyone, there are too many people who can't or don't know how to care for their animals and too many horses who aren't useful. We, not the slaughter houses, are our horses' worst enemy."^[12]

Congressional Taxing on Breeding

It appears that legislators in Washington may have some ideas of their own.

Stephanie Sellers, in an editorial letter to *The Pilot* observes:

"The 112th Congress is looking for ways to raise revenue.

There are approximately 9.2 million horses in America. Applying fair taxes to horse owners would create significant revenue and spur the economy. Taxing horses would also create a greater sense of responsibility for horse owners.

Citizens take better care of things they have to pay for. Taxing horses would also deter horse overpopulation, as breeding would be minimized. Redeeming pride for America's much-admired companion animal would make passing bills to halt horse slaughter more favorable."^[13]

Probably the most relevant advantage of the taxation scheme is related to the taxation of breeders, not the average horse owner. Currently breeders enjoy a breeding incentive by way of millions of tax dollar write offs. Ideally, these breeding incentives and prohibitive tax write offs should be abolished and taxes enforced.

Overactive breeders are the root of the surplus horse situation devaluing the market. This would return horse breeding to quality over quantity and benefit the industry as a whole.



Part 6: Conclusion

When horse slaughter comes to town, environmental hazards, economic woes, and the stigma associated with the cruelties inherent to killing horses for their meat, are only a part of the price the community pays.

THE horse slaughter industry is an insidious, brutal and predatory business that exists for one reason and one reason only. Horse slaughter exists to supply the demand for horse meat and to profit from it. Horse slaughter is not a humane end to a horse's life. Horse slaughter is not euthanasia.

When horse slaughter comes to town, environmental hazards, economic woes, and the stigma associated with the cruelties inherent to killing horses for their meat, are only a part of the price the community pays.

Putting those considerations aside, relevant as they are, what about the horses?

Horse slaughter is a cruel betrayal of an animal who has made it possible for America to develop the richness it enjoys.

As Laura Hillenbrand, author of "Seabiscuit" says,

"Here are these exquisite, immensely powerful creatures, who willingly give us their labor in return for our stewardship. They have attended us throughout history, bearing us across frontiers and into battle, pulling our plows, thrilling us in sport, warming us with their beauty. We owe them more than we can ever repay. To send these trusting creatures to slaughter is beneath their dignity and ours."^[1]

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