

H.R. 503 THE AMERICAN HORSE SLAUGHTER PREVENTION ACT

Full Title/Description: To amend the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines to be slaughtered for human consumption, and for other purposes.

Horse Welfare Coalition Position: The HWC is **opposed** to H.R. 503 and **is actively pursuing defeat** of this legislation because it does not believe this legislation adequately addresses the long-term welfare of the horses that would not be slaughtered.

Purpose of the Legislation

- Amends the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of any horse or other equine to be slaughtered for human consumption.
- Increases the appropriation for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act to \$5M dollars.

Why the Horse Welfare Coalition Opposes this Legislation

Over 90,000 U.S. horses are processed for human consumption each year in the United States, Canada and Mexico. These unwanted horses are sold because they are no longer serviceable, infirm, dangerous, or their owners are no longer able to care for them. The Horse Welfare Coalition endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioner's (AAEP) position on the transportation and processing of horses:

The AAEP recognize that the processing of unwanted horses is currently a necessary aspect of the equine industry, and provides a humane alternative to allowing the horse to continue a life of discomfort and pain, and possibly inadequate care or abandonment. During transportation and processing, the horses should be:

- Treated humanely and with dignity.
- Transported to the production facility according to the regulations approved by the USDA in 2001. (These regulations phase out the use of double-deck trailers, and address humane care and husbandry practices).
- Euthanized in a humane manner in accordance with the guidelines established by the AVMA.

The Horse Welfare Coalition is **actively pursuing defeat** of H.R. 503 because it does not address the following issues:

- **Disposition of Affected Horses:** H.R. 503 does not address the status of the unwanted horses affected by this bill. Approximately 90,000 unwanted horses per year will need to find an alternative home, or will need to be euthanized and have their carcasses properly disposed of.
- **Costs Related to the Care of the Horses:** Under the proposed American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (AHSPA), care must potentially be provided for an additional 90,000 horses annually. The American Association of Equine Practitioners estimates that basic subsistence care would cost approximately \$1825/horse/year resulting in needed funds of more than \$164 million/year during the first year of enactment. In addition, whereas there may initially be 70,000 horses to care for, during subsequent years that number could be expected to increase by up to 90,000 per year, with a corresponding increase in cost. This bill does not address financial support required for unwanted horses that are voluntarily given up by their owners to horse rescue facilities. Inadequate funding has a huge potential to create opportunities for inadequate care.
- **Animal Welfare:** The AHSPA does not address the welfare of horses that will not be slaughtered. Many of these unwanted horses will be donated to horse rescue and retirement facilities, which are not regulated by any governmental body. While many of these facilities are well run, regulations must be put in place to establish standards of care to ensure the humane care of these unwanted horses.
- **Environmental Concerns Related to Horse Carcass Disposal:** The primary options to dispose of horse carcasses, other than processing at slaughter facilities, include burial, rendering, cremation, placement in a landfill, and composting. However, disposal regulations and methods are state and county issues, and they vary from locale to locale. Not all options are available to all horse owners in all areas, and the inevitable disposal of an additional 90,000 horse carcasses per year will create environmental problems. The cost of disposal for a horse carcass also varies widely by state, from \$10 to \$1500, depending on the method of disposal. There is also concern about soil contamination from euthanasia drugs in buried carcasses.

The Horse Welfare Coalition is an alliance of veterinary, horse-industry and agricultural groups representing over 500,000 individual members in the United States. Our mission is to promote humane and responsible care of the horse through public education and policy advocacy. Members of the Coalition represent many of the leading organizations in the areas of veterinary medicine, breed registration, horse-industry advancement and agricultural management.

Known Opposition to the HWC Position: National Horse Protection Coalition (Animal Welfare Institute, HSUS, Society for Animal Protective Legislation, Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, Blue Horse Charities, American Humane Association, Fasig-Tipton Company, Inc.)

Current Legislative Status: H.R. 503 was introduced on February 1, 2005 by Rep John Sweeney (R-20th/NY) and was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The Horse Welfare Coalition urges strong consideration of the financial and environmental consequences of this legislation and opposes anything less than humane treatment of these unwanted horses.

For More Information: Please contact Dr. Mark Lutschaunig (mlutschaunig@avma.org) at (800) 321-1473, ext. 3205

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