

HORSE SLAUGHTER MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: Horse slaughter must be stopped because it is inhumane.

FACT: The euthanasia method used at the plants occurs *before* processing, and this method is humane, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the USDA, which regulates the practice. The method meets specific humane requirements set forth by AVMA's Panel on Euthanasia, the U.S. Congress,¹ the American Association of Equine Practitioners, and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Statement on Euthanasia because it results in instantaneous brain death.

The plants are required to have USDA veterinarians on site supervising the euthanasia of each horse during the entire time the plant is in operation. The veterinarian is bound by law to stop the process and close the plant immediately if any evidence of inhumane treatment is witnessed. Retired USDA veterinarians who fulfilled this role are available for interviews.

MYTH: Banning U.S. horse slaughter will not affect our economy since the plants are foreign-owned.

FACT: Hundreds of employees in the United States who work for horse owners, trucking companies, auction houses, shipping companies and other suppliers will lose their jobs. The plant communities of DeKalb, Illinois, and Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, will be especially hard-hit, with each of the local economies taking a predicted hit of \$41 million. The value of each horse will decrease by approximately \$300, according to an independent report on the unintended consequences of a horse slaughter ban -- the ripple effect of which is predicted to cripple the \$40 billion U.S. horse industry.² The negative impact will be significant, just as it is when a Toyota plant or other foreign-owned business is closed in any other community.

MYTH: If horse slaughter for human consumption is banned, the processing plants will still accept horses and process them for other important purposes.

FACT: H.R. 503's ban on processing horses for human consumption will close down the three processing plants, according to plant owners, and result in:

- Elimination of the only option that provides salvage value to the horse owner for an animal that is no longer serviceable, useful or desired.
- Elimination of the only USDA-inspected source of equine protein, an essential element in the diet of U.S. zoo animals.
- Elimination of the only large-scale equine research venue for leading schools of veterinary medicine.
- Elimination of the only U.S. source of equine pericardium sacs used in human heart surgeries.
- Elimination of the service plants provide to horse owners by preparing the horse carcasses for acceptance by rendering plants - a time consuming procedure that the slaughter plants now provide at no cost to the owner.

MYTH: The only way to prevent the inhumane treatment of horses is to BAN the private property right to choose horse processing.

FACT: Congress has already performed its duty by passing laws that govern the humane treatment of horses during transportation to the plants and onsite. Enforcement of these laws is the role of the USDA and local and state officials, so if there is ever a compliance problem, these officials will report it.

However, if the right to send a horse to slaughter is taken away from horse owners, the Unintended Consequences paper predicts serious problems. Nearly half of all horse owners earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year.³ If these owners are *forced* to pay \$300-\$2,000 to dispose of a horse, instead of being able to *receive* value for their property (\$300-400 for processing), the report says that some owners will have no other option but to abandon the animal, slaughter it themselves and prepare the carcass for rendering, or simply neglect it by not adequately feeding the horse. Concerns regarding the effects of BSE and other diseases on rendered products have resulted in a decreasing number of rendering facilities in the U.S., so horse owners are finding it increasingly difficult to find a renderer. Horse burial is illegal in many areas.

MYTH: The horse industry supports HR 503.

FACT: The American Quarter Horse Association (largest U.S. horse organization), the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture (which has jurisdiction over the legislation), and 190 other horse, veterinary, cattle, and agriculture organizations OPPOSE this horse slaughter ban based on fundamental economic, humane and public health issues. Many horse owners support keeping the horse processing option, even if some choose not to use it.

MYTH: If U.S. horse slaughter is banned, Kentucky Derby champions like Ferdinand will be saved from slaughter in the future.

FACT: Ferdinand was slaughtered in Japan, and this ban will not prevent the foreign slaughter of any future unwanted horses. After horses leave this country -- whether they go to Mexico, Latin America, or Japan -- passage of HR 503 would not prevent them from being slaughtered in one of many foreign slaughterhouses, where seven million horses are slaughtered each year for human consumption. The legislation would simply eliminate the U.S. plants: the most stringently regulated and humane animal processing plants in the world.

MYTH: "Some horses...are improperly stunned and are conscious when they are hoisted by a rear leg to have their throats cut," states the HSUS horse slaughter fact sheet posted at www.hsus.org.

FACT: Each and every horse is humanely euthanized before any processing activities occur and the three plants have a documented track record of humane treatment. In fact, USDA veterinarian inspectors are present for the humane euthanasia of every horse, and are mandated by law to stop the process if the horses aren't rendered brain dead before they are moved and processed. Not only is humane treatment the law, it is good business practice. Treating the horses well and minimizing their pain and stress keeps the plants operating smoothly and efficiently.

MYTH: Horse neglect did not increase in the past when the number slaughtered horses declined, so if HR 503 passes and the number of horses slaughtered drops from 90,000 to zero, there will be no increase in neglect, according to bill sponsor Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-Ky).

FACT: An increase in neglect *is* likely, according to university experts, because the ban will take away the only option that provides salvage value for disposing of the nation's unwanted horses. According to the Unintended Consequences report, "Tens of thousands of horses could be neglected or abandoned if a processing ban were imposed.....Local and state governments will be adversely impacted by increased costs of regulation and care of unwanted or neglected horses."⁴

Market forces, not slaughter plants, determine how many horses go to slaughter. Since there is no national system for recording and tracking horse neglect, there is no way to identify trends or compare trends to slaughter numbers. Each year, a variety of factors dictate the number of unwanted horses: the number of horses with insurmountable behavior problems, the disposable income of horse owners, and the market value of horses. The plants are the repository for the unwanted horses that no one else will take.

MYTH: If horse slaughter is banned, people will adopt or buy the unwanted horses.

FACT: The horses that go to slaughter are the unwanted of the unwanted -- often because they can't be ridden, or are dangerous. Their market value is so low, no one else bought them. A few of the influx of 60,000 to 90,000 unwanted horses may be adopted. However, if there were such a demand to adopt and care for this type of horse, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management would have been able to find homes for the thousands of unwanted wild horses that taxpayers paid nearly \$40 million to feed and shelter in 2005. The average yearly cost of caring for a horse is \$2,300 and many horses live to be 30 years old.

MYTH: Slaughter plants should be closed because that's where stolen horses end up.

FACT: There is no evidence of a stolen horse problem at the plants, so banning horse slaughter *can't* be a solution. The three horse slaughter plants document every horse that arrives, and very few, if any, stolen horses have been found. In Texas, as of 1997, a law enforcement official onsite inspects each horse and checks it against reports of stolen horses. In Illinois, horses arriving are also checked against records of stolen horses. Why would someone steal a horse worth \$3,000 or \$800 to sell it for \$300 to a processing plant?

MYTH: Horses are treated poorly during transport to slaughter.

FACT: The treatment of horses to slaughter is stringently regulated. No other animal has humane treatment laws governing its transportation to slaughter, so horses are already protected more than any other livestock animal.

USDA reports that the regulations are being enforced. In fact, an analysis published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* in 1999, conducted by renowned animal welfare

expert Temple Grandin, PhD, stated "...owner abuse or neglect (before transportation) is the primary cause of

severe welfare problems in horses arriving at slaughter plants." Although USDA has increased the number of inspections of horse transportation to slaughter, inspectors have found no evidence of a systemic problem, according to a recent USDA letter to the House Committee on Agriculture.⁵

MYTH: Video on anti-slaughter Web sites proves that horse slaughter is not humane.

FACT: The footage of horses being mistreated may have been shot in Mexico or Latin America, but it was NOT filmed in any of the three U.S. plants operating today, nor does it reflect the humane euthanasia process mandated by current federal laws and regulations. To the plants' and their regulators' knowledge, there is *no* evidence that demonstrates a systemic problem of horses being mistreated in the three U.S. processing plants. Therefore, there is *no* defensible reason to ban horse processing for human consumption.

MYTH: Americans should support HR 503 because animal rights groups say it will improve horse welfare.

FACT: The Humane Society of the United States also said it would improve the welfare of animals saved after Hurricane Katrina, but HSUS is currently under investigation by the Louisiana Attorney General, who is questioning exactly how they improved animal welfare, especially since they raised \$30 million to pursue this end.⁶

The Animal Liberation Front supports a ban on horse slaughter so strongly that one of their members burned down a horse slaughter plant in 1997, putting animals at risk. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) employees were also charged with animal cruelty last year for killing cats and dogs and throwing them into dumpsters after stating they were going to take them to shelters and put them up for adoption.⁷

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¹ The Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1904, The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1977, and USDA Food Safety Inspection Service Regulations on Humane Handling and Slaughter of Livestock (1978 - 2003) and 1996 Commercial Transportation of Horses to Slaughter (updated 2002)

² Ahearn J, Anderson D, Bailey D, et al. "The Unintended Consequences of a Ban on the Humane Slaughter (Processing) of Horses in the United States," available at www.animalwelfarecouncil.org. Accessed July 29, 2006.

³ American Horse Council, 2005

⁴ Ahearn J, Anderson D, Bailey D, et al. "The Unintended Consequences of a Ban on the Humane Slaughter (Processing) of Horses in the United States," available at www.animalwelfarecouncil.org. Accessed July 29, 2006.

⁵ Letter from USDA to Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

⁶ Salmon, Jacqueline, "Red Cross, Humane Society Under Investigation" Sunday, March 26, 2006, p. A10, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/25/AR2006032501002_2.html. Retrieved August 14, 2006.

⁷ "PETA Employees Face Felony Cruelty Animal Charges," available at www.petakillsanimals.com/petaTrial.cfm. Retrieved August 21, 2006.

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