

WHEN
HORSE
SLAUGHTER
COMES
TO
TOWN

An Int'l Fund for Horses
SPECIAL REPORT

Written and Researched by Jane Allin

Edited by Vivian J Grant

March 2011



Table of Contents

I. Environmental Impact

The serious, costly negative impact on the environment resulting from horse slaughter facilities and the methods of waste disposal are well documented, and potentially harmful to the citizens of surrounding communities. **Pp 3-5.**

II. Economic Growth and Community Welfare

Horse slaughter operations, time and time again, have shown to have a detrimental impact on the economic disposition and image of the communities where they are located. Slaughterhouses are not good neighbors, increase crime and serious on-the-job injuries to their workers. **Pp 5-7.**

III. Legal Implications

There are ample legal complications associated with attempting to re-establish horse slaughter in the U.S. The remaining slaughter houses in the U.S. were shut down in 2007 as a result of state legislation. However, federal legislation is still being actively pursued to end it nationally. Stringent new requirements for the export of American horse meat from North America to Europe has been mandated due to prohibited drug residues potentially harmful to human health. **Pp 7-10.**

IV. Opposition to Horse Slaughter

There is strong opposition to horse slaughter in the United States and Canada. It has been reported that as many as 85% of the population is opposed to it. The horrendous conditions of transport and brutality involved in the slaughter of horses are unspeakable. The grassroots movement to end it is relentless. Horse slaughter will never be accepted as part of American culture. **Pp 10-15.**

V. Alternatives to Horse Slaughter

There are many alternatives to horse slaughter. A group of respected horse rescues have developed a six point plan outlining workable solutions, some of which are already in place. A strategic component to stopping horse slaughter is reducing the surplus horse population by placing the onus of accountability on horse breeders and owners. Congress is also looking at removing breeding incentive tax breaks and taxing horse owners. **Pp 15-20.**

VI. Conclusion

The horse slaughter industry is an insidious, brutal and unforgiving 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. 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 they will pay. **P 20.**

I. Environmental Impact

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

1 Holland, John; Horse Slaughter Trends 2006-2010; Equine Welfare Alliance; http://www.equinewelfarealliance.org/uploads/Horse_Slaughter_Trends_2006-2009.pdf ; February 2010.

2 Testimony of Congressman John E. Sweeney; H.R. 503 – American Horse Slaughter Protection Act; <http://republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/108/hearings/07252006Hearing1992/Sweeney.pdf> ; Jul. 25, 2006.

3 Sorg, Lisa; Violations Dog Beltex, Dallas Crown; <http://tiny.cc/ag62l> ; Jun. 19, 2003.

4 Bacon, Paula; Open letter to state legislatures considering pro-horse slaughter resolutions; Animal Law Coalition; <http://tiny.cc/2wrx6> ; Feb. 13, 2009.

5 Sorg, Lisa (<http://tiny.cc/ag62l>).

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 U.S. 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

6 DeKalb Sanitary District; DeKalb Sanitary District Board meeting Minutes; <http://tiny.cc/31y3m> ; Jan. 18, 2006.

7 Allen, Laura; Animal Law Coalition; "Sacia introduces new bill to support horse slaughter," ; <http://tiny.cc/ufjo4> ; Jan. 14, 2010.

8 Holland, John; Canadian Horse Defense Coalition, Summary of Cavel International Violations – Non Compliance and Response; <http://tiny.cc/sjwwj> ; undated.

9 Holland, John; Horse Slaughter Dream a Financial Nightmare; Harnesslink Newsroom; <http://tiny.cc/tq5o6> ; May 14, 2009.

10 Holland, John (<http://tiny.cc/sjwwj>).

11 Holland, John (<http://tiny.cc/tq5o6>).

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

II. Economic Growth, Employment and Community Welfare

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."¹³

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. 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."¹⁴

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 2015.¹⁵

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.

12 Press Release; Canadian Horse Defence Coalition; <http://tiny.cc/n6nx7> ; Dec. 10, 2010.

13 Potter, Meg; Selling our soul; Expendable equines in the new recession; http://www.bridleandbit.com/artman/publish/article_25099.shtml ; Apr. 3, 2009.

14 Bacon, Paula; Open Letter to State Legislatures; <http://tiny.cc/tzgzl> ; February 2009.

15 Ibid.

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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ Their willingness to accept low wages has the potential to drive down wages in the communities that support them.

Furthermore, animal processing facilities are one of the most dangerous places in America to work. According to statistics from the U.S. 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 U.S.) and thus likely to use public emergency rooms that treat everyone regardless of ability to pay."¹⁸ This has the capacity to put a strenuous burden 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."¹⁹

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."²⁰

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."²¹

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

16 GDP: Percent GDP from agriculture; EarthTrends- The Environmental Information Portal, World Resources Institute; <http://tiny.cc/tycrd> ; 2007.

17 Exploiting immigrant labor; http://www.goveg.com/workerRights_immigrant.asp ; undated.

18 Rahman, Mizanur; Illegal immigrants: benefits and negatives, Immigration Chronicles; http://blogs.chron.com/immigration/archives/2008/08/post_151.html ; Aug. 16, 2008.

19 Potter, Meg (http://www.bridleandbit.com/artman/publish/article_25099.shtml)

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

less powerful human groups such as women and children is clear and bears itself out in increased domestic violence in communities surrounding slaughterhouses."²²

III. Legal Implications

U.S. Legislation to End Horse Slaughter

Legislation banning the domestic slaughter and export for slaughter of American horses for human consumption has a long history. It continues to be pursued at both the State and Federal levels where it receives majority bipartisan support from lawmakers and constituents.

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 at the Federal level was introduced on July 17, 2001, in the 107th Congress. Bills banning horse slaughter and export for slaughter for human consumption have been re-introduced in Congress for the past decade. None of these bills have been successful.²³

Any type of legislation appearing to have any potential for ending horse slaughter for human consumption – at the State and Federal levels – is opposed and vigorously lobbied against by powerful factions of the animal agriculture industry, on each occasion overriding the will and intention of the people who just as vigorously come out in support.

Federal legislation is set to be introduced in the 112th Congress that will eliminate the export of horses for the purpose of slaughter for human consumption and prohibit the return of horse slaughtering operations to U.S. soil.

Other Legislative Strategies to End Horse Slaughter

During the 109th Congress, sponsors of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503/S. 311) successfully sought enactment of a rider in USDA appropriations acts to deny federal 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 horses.

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 horse slaughter across the country.²⁴

Legislators introducing bills to return horse slaughter to U.S. soil in their States, are seeking ways to bypass the federal ban, including creating their own State horse meat inspection programs.

Federal agriculture officials call that presumption into question, stating that the restrictions that ban U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors from overseeing the killing and processing of horses also apply to all State inspection programs.

²² Ibid.

²³ Int'l Fund for Horses; Horse Slaughter Legislative Timeline; <http://tiny.cc/zajwo> ; 1998-2011.

²⁴ New York Bar Association, Committee on Legal Issues Pertaining to Animals; http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/Horse_Slaughter.pdf ; undated.

"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.²⁵

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 Bute²⁶ and other prohibited medications routinely given to horses in the United States and Canada."²⁷

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

Decades of USDA studies asserting U.S. and Canadian horse meat as chemically harmless have been branded as 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*.²⁸

This study questions USDA and CFIA horse meat testing capabilities. USDA and CFIA programs have consistently given U.S. 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.²⁹

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.³⁰

25 Young, JoAnne; Federal law would not allow horse meat to be shipped out of state; *Lincoln Journal-Star*; <http://tiny.cc/sj6wk> ; Feb. 28, 2011.

26 Dr. Bob Wright - Veterinary Scientist, Equine and Alternative Livestock/OMAFRA; Phenylbutazone (Bute) Use in Horses; <http://tiny.cc/37jmn> ; Dec. 1, 2004.

27 Int'l Fund for Horses; Canadian Food Inspection Agency readies for new EU directive on slaughter horses; Tuesday's Horse, <http://wp.me/p6VVi-2dV> ; Jan. 31, 2010.

28 Nicholas Dodman, Nicolas Blondeau and Ann M. Marini; Association of phenylbutazone usage with horses bought for slaughter: A public health risk ; <http://tiny.cc/duvc4> ; Feb. 17, 2010.

29 Horse Industry Association of Alberta; Proposed regulations for horses going into the food chain; <http://www.albertahorseindustry.ca/eNews/foodchainregs.html> ; 2010.

30 Vets for Equine Welfare Fact Sheet: Medications and US Horse Meat; <http://www.vetsforequinewelfare.org/medications.php> ; February 2007.

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.³¹

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."³²

An article "New EU rules may end slaughter of American Horses," written by Carrie Gobernatz of Examiner.com states:

"The new rules will mean that horses coming from auctions and other sources in the U.S. will have to be kept drug free on a feedlot for half a year. Producers estimate that feeding horses that long will more than double their cost, making them less competitive with horses from other sources. And that is likely to be only half their problem."³³

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, U.S. 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."³⁴

Implementation and Enforcement

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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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.

31 Explanatory memorandum to the horse passport regulations 2009 No. 1611; Office of Public Sector Information, UK; http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2009/em/uksiem_20091611_en.pdf ; Jun. 2, 2009.

32 Int'l Fund for Horses; CFIA reporting system for slaughter horses flawed and unenforceable; Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVVi-2hy> ; Feb. 9, 2010.

33 Gobernatz, Carrie; New EU rules may end slaughter of American Horse; Horse News Examiner; <http://tiny.cc/4ekjq> Aug.4, 2009.

34 Ibid.

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 for human consumption.

Even more alarming, some U.S. kill buyers have indicated that they are unconcerned about the new regulations and will simply falsify the required Equine Information Document (EID) paperwork. 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?

Just the Beginning

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 the U.S. will comply or adopt any formal procedures to provide sufficient information for the completion of a Canadian EID.

In any case, 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 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,³⁵ together with the growing awareness that horses in North America are not subject to the restrictions that apply to food animals and have been administered otherwise forbidden drugs.

The Int'l Fund for Horses reports that horse meat faces a ban in Italy:

"When this proposal is successful and horse meat is banned, it will take a huge bite out of demand and save more than 200,000 innocent [horse's] lives in Italy alone, not counting the horses who are slaughtered for human consumption in other countries for export to Europe."³⁶

On June 16, 2010, Canadian Parliament by MP Alex Atamanenko (NDP Agriculture Critic) tabled a Private Member's Bill, C-544³⁷, 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.³⁸

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.

The bill currently sits in the first reading in the House of Commons.

35 Int'l Fund for Horses; Horse Slaughter Bombshell hits Belgium and Holland; Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVVi-2xT> ; Apr. 19, 2010.

36 Int'l Fund for Horses; Horsemeat faces ban in Italy; Tuesday's Horse via *The Telegraph* UK, written by Nick Pisa; <http://wp.me/p6VVVi-2gJ> ; Feb.9, 2010

37 House of Commons Canada; Bill Text C-544; <http://tiny.cc/8qwtvn> ; Jun. 16, 2010.

38 Int'l Fund for Horses; Atamanenko moves to ban horse meat for human consumption in Canada; Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVVi-2P9> ; Jun. 17, 2010.

IV. Opposition 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:

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

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

In 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.³⁹

These numbers have not changed significantly.

"Most of the people in this country want to see slaughter ended," notes Karen Pomroy of Equine Voices, an Arizona-based horse rescue organization for horses abused by the pharmaceutical industry and slated for slaughter. "The newest polls say 85 percent. For years we've been trying to get laws through, but too many pockets are being lined in Washington while foreign companies are making millions of dollars by killing our horses."⁴⁰

Congressional Vote

A legislative vote in the U.S. House of Representatives further demonstrates the will of the people.

On September 7, 2006, Bill H.R. 503, a comprehensive proposal to ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption as well as the transport for slaughter elsewhere passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives by roll call vote. "The totals were 263 Ayes, 146 Nays, 23 Present/Not Voting."⁴¹

The bill died as it was held up by pro-slaughter Senator Conrad Burns and was not allowed to come before the Senate for a vote.⁴²

No longer a Senator, Burns' Montana 2006 milestones include being selected by Time Magazine as one of America's Five Worst Senators,⁴³ and in September 2006 as one of The 20 Most Corrupt Members of Congress by the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.⁴⁴

39 Equine Advocates; Horse slaughter an American disgrace, an American shame;

<http://www.equineadvocates.com/hs/slaughterprintout.html> ; 2000.

40 McNamee, Gregory; Horse slaughter in America; Encyclopedia Britannica Blog; <http://tiny.cc/btzst> ; Aug. 4, 2007

41 H.R. 503; 109th Congress; http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill_xpd?bill=h109-503 ; 2005-2006.

42 HorseIncorp; <http://www.horseincorp.org/Slaughter.html> ; undated.

43 Conrad Burns: Shock Jock, America's Five Worst Senators; *Time Magazine*; <http://tiny.cc/lhsea> ; Apr. 14, 2006.

44 20 most corrupt members of Congress: Burns, Frist, Santorum et al; *The Huffington Post*; <http://tiny.cc/3yxci> ; Mar. 28, 2008.

Re-Opening of Horse Slaughter Plants Fought

Despite protests to end slaughter, some states in the U.S. have attempted to re-open horse slaughter facilities.

In May of 2009, a new Montana state law, HB 418, was passed that invites private investors to develop horse slaughtering facilities in that state. However, it faces many challenges, one of which is the opposition to horse slaughter by state residents and veterinarians, together with other issues such as legal, environmental and economical.

An excerpt from an *Equestrian Magazine* news release is a measure of the distaste among the citizens of Montana;

"Tens of thousands of humanitarians across Montana are opposed to horse slaughter. Survey after survey has shown that more than 70 percent of all Americans oppose the practice, where living horses have their throats slit and are dismembered while hanging upside down as they bleed to death to feed Frenchmen hungry for their poisonous chemically tainted meat. A poll on a respected on-line paper in Montana on the day of the vote reflected 76% of readers against building a plant."⁴⁵

Dr. Lisa Jacobson DVM states:

"As a Montanan and practicing equine veterinarian, I strongly oppose HB 418. I am a member of both AVMA & AAEP; however, these organizations misrepresent the views of their members. Their pro-horse slaughter stance is not based on a member survey.

"Equine slaughter plants are documented to be very inhumane. Documents recently released by the USDA regarding horse slaughter in the U.S. make clear the unmistakable brutality inherent to the commercial slaughter of horses. Contained in the 906 page document covering eleven months of 2005 are 800 photos, showing horses with their eyeballs dangling, their legs ripped off, and even newborn foals." (See FOIA documents at <http://www.kaufmanzoning.net/>)⁴⁶

Dr. Caroline M. Betts, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Economics at the University of Southern California stated:

"We are currently being inundated with arguments that the reintroduction of equine slaughter on U.S. soil is 'necessary'. The only thing it is necessary for is to fill the pockets of the big breeders and their agricultural associates, and perhaps the pockets of a bought politician or two. Apparently the senators and representatives of Montana who just passed a bill to introduce a new horse slaughter plant there care more about fulfilling those needs, than the fact that 85 percent of their own state citizens strongly object to the proposal."⁴⁷

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.

45 *Equestrian Magazine* news release; Horse slaughter; The snow job in Montana will melt.

46 Ibid.

47 Betts, Caroline M., PhD; The true economics of horse slaughter; <http://tiny.cc/ppq35> ; via *Horseback Magazine*; 2009.

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."⁴⁸

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."⁴⁹

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.

48 Allen, Laura; Animal Law Coalition; Excerpts of information presented during hearings on the 2008 anti-horse slaughter bill; <http://tiny.cc/y6r6b> ; Jun. 24, 2009.

49 Testimony in Support of H.R. 6958, Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008; http://www.horsefund.org/resources/Dodman_Testimony_HR6598_080731.pdf ; Jul. 31, 2008.

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."⁵⁰

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."⁵¹

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 U.S. 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.

The Grassroots Movement

There will always be animal welfare groups, advocates and horse loving citizens continually working to shut down any horse slaughter operations that may find a way to open.

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.

"I think the recent press about the wild horse roundups has shed light on our country's dirty little secret, horse slaughter", said Shelley Abrams, co-founder of Americans Against Horse Slaughter (AAHS). "The wild horse advocates and organizations that have worked for so many years to protect the wild horses have done a wonderful job of creating mass awareness to the general public through the media and that has inspired the lay person to learn more." Abrams added.⁵²

Laura Allen of the Animal Law Coalition adds:

50 Chambers of Carnage, CHDC; <http://www.defendhorsescanada.org/ChambersofCarnage.html> ; March 2010.

51 Canadian Horse Defence Coalition; Canadian Slaughterhouse Horrors; <http://tiny.cc/clhtx> ; May 7, 2010.

52 AAHS; Man's best friend campaigns to end horse slaughter; <http://tiny.cc/sw1px> ; Jan. 27, 2010.

"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."⁵³

Racing Opposition

Several major racetracks oppose horse slaughter.

Suffolk Downs, located in East Boston, became the first track in the country to implement an anti-slaughter policy in June 2008. Churchill Downs, Santa Anita Park, Gulfstream Park and a host of other venues have moved to adopt similar policies since then.

The New York Racing Association (NYRA) announced in December 2009 that they are introducing an official anti slaughter policy whereby offending horsemen would be harshly penalized. The penalties are stiff. Any owner or trainer who is caught selling either directly or indirectly a horse to slaughter will have their stalls permanently rescinded and prohibited from racing on all New York tracks.⁵⁴

The guidelines also encourage horsemen to use and support horse rescue and retirement adoptive initiatives as a recourse to slaughter.

"We are fully committed to protecting our sport's equine athletes" said NYRA president, Charles Hayward. "This policy sends the message that horse slaughter will not be tolerated and that those participating in this practice, either knowingly or for lack of due diligence, will not be welcome at Aqueduct, Belmont Park, or Saratoga."⁵⁵

V. Alternatives to Horse Slaughter

With the devastated economy, its slow recovery and the closure of all horse slaughter facilities in the U.S., 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.⁵⁶

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.

53 Allen, Laura; Animal Law Coalition; Native Americans Proved Not to be Proponents of Horse Slaughter; <http://tiny.cc/zw02m> ; Jul. 26, 2009.

54 Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation; <http://tiny.cc/nhqmw> ;undated.

55 Silver, Dan; NYRA Announces Anti-Slaughter Policy; <http://tiny.cc/0v7d2> ; Dec. 10, 2009.

56 Stern, Peter; What's new at the dinner table; Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVi-J> ; May 21, 2007.

"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."⁵⁷

Essentially what this implies is that if horse slaughter for human consumption is illegal as well as the transport of horses across U.S. borders to Canadian or Mexican slaughterhouses, 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."⁵⁸

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 the over population and neglect.⁵⁹ 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."⁶⁰

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."⁶¹

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

57 Allen, Laura; Study shows ban on horse slaughter would not result in numbers of unwanted horses; Animal Law Coalition; <http://tiny.cc/gl7vr> ; Jun. 17, 2008.

58 Ibid.

59 Allen, Laura; Animal Law Coalition; A study of equine slaughter/abuse patterns following closure of horse slaughter plants in US; <http://tiny.cc/6hwkd> ; Jun. 18, 2008.

60 Fitch, R.T.; Pro-slaughter group issues tainted survey results; <http://tiny.cc/8r4ht> ; Jul. 10, 2009.

61 Hogan, Patricia, DVM, ACVS; Putting the horse first? Equine Advocates via *Bloodhorse*; <http://tiny.cc/s9hvg> ; 2009.

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*.⁶²

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 U.S. 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."⁶³

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.'⁶⁴

"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."

Dr. Betts concludes:

62 LaMarra, Tom; Unwanted horses: How serious a problem? *Bloodhorse*; <http://tiny.cc/50k6w> ; Jun. 19, 2008.

63 Hogan, Patricia, DVM, ACVS; Putting the Horse First? <http://tiny.cc/s9hvj> .

64 Lenz, Tom; The unwanted horse in the United States – international implications; <http://tiny.cc/4dcag> ; Feb. 5, 2010.

"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?"⁶⁵

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?"⁶⁶

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."⁶⁷

Congressional Intervention

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."⁶⁸

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.

65 Betts, Caroline M. PhD; HorseTalk; <http://tiny.cc/v1glw> ; Feb. 17, 2010.

66 Betts, Caroline M. PhD; Letter to the editor, *HorseBack Magazine*; <http://wp.me/p6VVVi-3T6> ; Mar. 25, 2009.

67 RegardingHorses.com; Stop horse slaughter: Is there another solution?; <http://tiny.cc/8m182> ; Jan. 11, 2008.

68 Sellers, Stephanie; They Tax Horses Don't They?; ThePilot.com; <http://tiny.cc/og3bs> ; Feb. 3, 2011.

Rescuers to the Rescue

The quest to resolve the current problem of the surplus horse population continues in earnest.

In December, 2010, a group of leading equine rescue and sanctuary operators from across the United States put together a paper proposing a six-point plan (outlined below) to eliminate the slaughter of American horses.

The premise is based on viable interim alternatives and stipulates the provision that the commercial equine industry and the horse rescue sanctuary community collaborate rather than disagree on the much debated subject of horse slaughter.

Six-Point Plan to Eliminate the Slaughter of America's Horses

1. The creation of state and regional managed reserves to hold large numbers of horses safely until they can be absorbed back into the system.
2. Selected expansion of existing sanctuary capacity for rescues that establish business plans allowing them to accommodate and care for additional horses in their operations if more facility space is provided.
3. Expand existing and develop new sponsored foster home networks in which rescued horses are placed and supported with private individuals who have the facility and desire to keep horses, but are financially unable to.
4. Expand the concept of in-place rescue to keep more horses with dedicated and committed owners in their current homes with temporary financial or feeding assistance.
5. The creation of state and regional training centers and networks, in which younger, healthier horses, which represent most of those going to slaughter today, can receive the training they need to lead productive lives and therefore be much more eligible for adoption to new homes.
6. A relatively new development in equine rescue, a growing network of sanctuary operators who work together to place horses they cannot accept themselves, has saved literally thousands of horses in the past two years.⁶⁹

Racing to the Rescue

Together with over-breeding and the economic downturn in the U.S. the financial burden of owning a horse has become onerous for many individuals. Many racehorses no longer able to win have historically been sold to slaughter plants. Now more than ever this has become routine as it presents an easy way to dispose of an animal that no longer is turning a profit.

In response to the impact of these forces on all aspects of the Thoroughbred industry, The New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc. (NYTB) is proposing a task force that includes the New York Racing Association, the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen Association, Finger Lakes Gaming & Racetrack and the New York State Racing & Wagering Board for the purpose of broadening programs that assist thoroughbred owners forced with selling their horses while developing a policy that punishes any owner, breeder or trainer that either directly or indirectly contributes to an outcome where a horse is knowingly sent to slaughter.⁷⁰

69 Warren, Allen (in collaboration); Horse Rescue Alternatives to Horse Slaughter; <http://wp.me/P6VVi-3DC> ; December 2010.

70 NYTB Press Release; New York Thoroughbred Breeders Seek Task Force to Strengthen Horse Rescue Efforts; Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVi-3Ls> ; Feb. 8, 2011.

More recently other organizations have stepped up to the plate in terms of supporting off-the-track Thoroughbreds. On February 17, 2011, Frank Stronach, chairman and CEO of MI Developments Inc., announced the formation of the Gulfstream Park Thoroughbred After-Care Program to help find suitable homes for retired Thoroughbreds.⁷¹

Additionally, The Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission has approved a rule that would designate about \$100,000 a year out of a breeder's incentive fund to help care for retired racehorses. The proposal would use money from the Oklahoma Breeding Development Fund Special Account to help pay for the retraining and care of Oklahoma-bred thoroughbred racehorses.⁷²

Although racehorses are only one sector of the horses at risk, perhaps with these developments others will follow suit and reduce the number of horses that find their way to the slaughter pipeline.

VI. CONCLUSION

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 they will pay.

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."⁷³

For reprint or republication permission, please contact info@horsefund.org or 713.893.7813. Thank you.

71 Welsch, Mike; Stronach Forming New Equine Retirement Program; DRF; <http://tiny.cc/ev2pt> ; Feb. 17, 2011.

72 Associated Press; OK Racing Officials OK Help for Retired Racehorses; via Tuesday's Horse; <http://wp.me/p6VVi-3Ny> ; Feb. 19, 2011.

73 Save the Horses; Quotes against horse slaughter; <http://tiny.cc/6dlldb> ; 2009.