

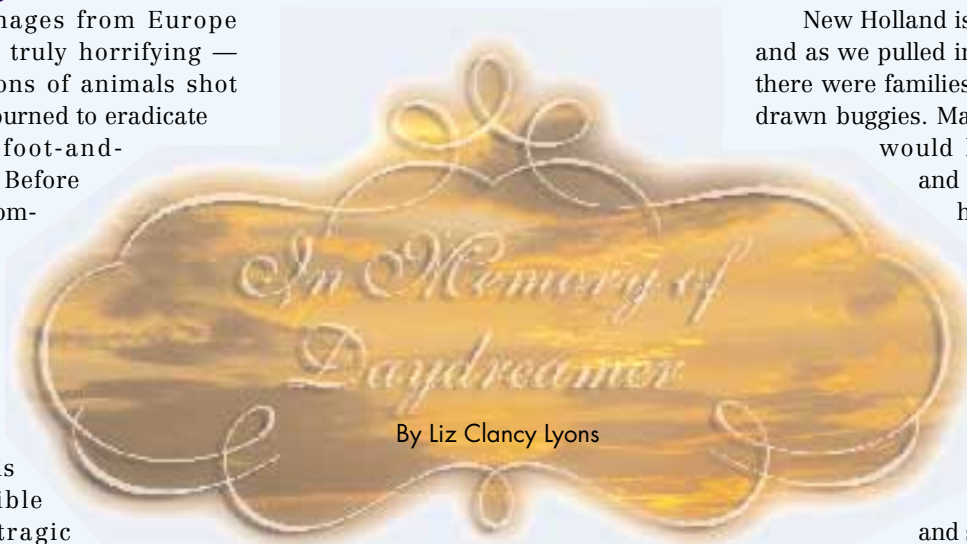
The images from Europe were truly horrifying — millions of animals shot and burned to eradicate the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. Before that, we were bombarded with stories of cows whose brains were ravaged by mad cow disease and were subsequently killed.

Yet, there is another horrible side to these tragic tales that has been largely hidden from us: Europe's search for "safe" meat means that an increasing number of American horses are being slaughtered and served for dinner on tables across Europe. I came face to face with this shocking truth when the Doris Day Animal League received an e-mail from an activist, asking us to do something about the horrible conditions at the New Holland Sales Stables in Pennsylvania, and the hundreds of horses who pass through there every week.

I started researching the auction and, through e-mail, met representatives of Carpe Diem Equine Rescue (CDER) and Equine Rescue Resources (EER), two groups working to improve the situation for horses at New Holland and elsewhere. Within weeks I was planning to meet them at the auction, where, with a donation from DDAL, we would rescue at least one horse who would be adopted out to a pre-screened home.

### The Auction...

The auction begins early every Monday morning, so I set out for New Holland late Easter Sunday. Over breakfast the next morning, representatives from CDER and ERR explained that many of the horses at New Holland



By Liz Clancy Lyons



**Daydreamer, the filly the DDAL bought to save her from slaughter.**

are brought in the night before, but more would arrive that morning.

There would be other horses who would not be for sale that day. They had already been purchased by a "killer buyer" — a name that says it all — for slaughter. Killer buyers travel from auction to auction until they have a truckload of horses which they then take to the slaughterhouse.

It sounded horrific, and I was apprehensive, but my new friends assured me that they would get me through the day. However, nothing they said could possibly have prepared me for what I experienced that day.

New Holland is in Amish country, and as we pulled into the parking lot, there were families arriving in horse-drawn buggies. Many of these horses would be sold that day, and a younger, stronger horse would draw the buggy home. There were also truck-drawn trailers and double-deck trucks, which are designed for shorter-necked species like cattle and sheep, but are often used to transport horses.

### Accosted by Noise...

When you enter the auction, you are accosted by the noise and hustle. The ring sits directly beyond the entrance and concession stand, and lots of people take their seats early. Others wander the stables to see what is for sale. The horses are secured to the stalls, and have hay and water. Each is identified by a numbered sticker, so prospective bidders can note a horse they may later bid on.

Some of the horses that day looked in good condition. They were the lucky ones who would probably end up being bought as riding horses. Others were not as handsome, and might be bought as working horses. However, they might just as easily be bought by a killer buyer. Still others were clearly slaughter-bound. These were the old, weak, lame and emaciated who, quite literally, were worth more dead than alive.

With just one trailer, we knew that we could only take two horses home, and trying to decide who most deserved to live would be difficult. When we saw an old mare whose hair was falling out and whose ribs and backbone were showing, she topped our list. Her condition was so poor we talked about buying and

euthanizing her, simply to save her from the long and torturous journey to the slaughterhouse. We noted her number and continued walking.

### Gorgeous Black Filly...

When the bidding began, things moved very quickly. A horse was in and out of the ring in just a few moments, and it was easy to miss one of the animals you were after. That's what happened with the old mare. So my friends went to the office, and were told that a killer buyer had just bought her for \$60. We found him and offered \$100, and she was ours.

We put the mare in a relatively quiet stall, and went back up to the

that was operable, but would cost a lot to remove. More seriously, her ankle was badly fractured, and she would be in chronic pain for the rest of her life.

Undecided on what to do, we went back to the old mare, who seemed peaceful, despite her surroundings. Because she had been purchased with DDAL's donation, we named her Dora, in honor of Doris Day and the wonderful work she does for animals. While there had been some discussion of euthanizing Dora to end her misery, we all felt that she, perhaps more than any other horse there that day, deserved a second chance, and we made the decision to get her out of New Holland, alive. With some TLC we hoped she would come back to life.

The real concern, now, was what

would be calm, and would go easily. The vet went to prepare the solution.

### Not Just Horses...

Just then, a women supportive of horse rescue efforts told us there were two downed cows in the stock yard. (After the horses, cows and pigs are sold.) Workers had chased a herd of cows from the one building to another, and two had been trampled. One died immediately, and by the time we got to the yard, auction workers had already moved her body with a tractor. Thinking the second was also dead, they started to move her, when, to our horror, the poor cow began moving her head and kicking. Still, the workers continued to lift her with the tractor until my friend yelled to put her down.

The vet came back right then with the solution for Daydream, and when we relayed what had just happened, he used the solution on the cow instead, to put her out of her misery. Then, the tractor started up, and her body was pushed into the corner of the yard with the first, where they were both left for hours.

Although we were outraged and sickened, there was no time to dwell on what we had just seen, as Daydream, who had already been pre-sedated, was being led out into the yard, and was about to go down. The vet ran back to get more solution for Daydream, and then took her into the back barns, where she was finally put to rest.

At that point, our nerves were truly frayed. We had just put a beautiful filly to sleep, and had witnessed the cow's horrific death. But after a moment to regain our composure, we got back to work. We had space for one more horse on our trailer, and little time to fill it. The auction was nearly over, and most private sellers had already left. The majority of horses still on the premises had been bought for the slaughterhouses, and



**Dora, emaciated and exhausted, with DDAL's Liz Clancy Lyons. Bought from a killer buyer for \$100, Dora is recovering and living happily in a sanctuary.**

ring, in time to see a gorgeous black filly being led through. We immediately knew something was wrong with her, because the bidding was slow, so we started to bid. In a matter of minutes she, too, was ours. A vet is always on duty at the auction, and when we asked him to examine the black filly, the news was bad. She had a hernia

to do with the filly, who we named Daydream, again, after Doris Day. We had prevented Daydream from going to slaughter, but in all likelihood, she would be in serious pain for the next 25-30 years. With this in mind, we made the tough decision to have her euthanized. She would be pre-sedated, so that when she went, she

were waiting to be loaded onto the killers buyers' trucks.

One of the killer buyers said he would sell us a horse for \$600 (about what he would get by selling the horse pound-by-pound). That was more than we could afford, and we also were hesitant to put that much money into his hands. Just then, we noticed an old horse off to the side who was a little malnourished, but otherwise looked okay. We found the owner. He had bought him from an Amish family earlier, and intended to sell him before leaving. Knowing the only prospective buyers, other than us, would kill the horse, we offered the man \$300 on the spot, and the horse was ours.

### Dora, Reno and Daydreamer...

Tired, angry, relieved and sad all at once, we exited the auction house with our two charges — Dora, and the Amish workhorse who had been given a last minute reprieve — in tow. By now, it was drizzling again, and the lot was clearing. Trucks of pigs and cows were being moved out, and soon the killer buyers would be emptying the kill pens. We had left behind a beautiful young filly, named Daydream, and countless other animals who were only known by number. But we had saved three horses from slaughter, and two would soon



**The trampled cow, unable to stand, lies helpless. Fortunately, the auction vet would soon euthanize her.**

know a new and better life.

I turned to my friends, and I asked if they would mind if we changed Daydream's name. In retrospect, I liked to think that she had had one or two pleasant daydreams before her short, painful life was over, and I wanted to call her Daydreamer. Of course, they all agreed.

### After the Dust Settled...

We rescued Dora and Reno (as the Amish workhorse was later named) in April 2001. At the time the *Animal Guardian* is going to print, both are recovering nicely. Although Dora is still painfully skinny, her eyes grow brighter every day, and she is making a strong comeback. To see photographs of Dora's amazing comeback, visit our website, [www.ddal.org](http://www.ddal.org).

While the rescue of animals is important, the enforcement of anti-cruelty laws and the prosecution of those who break the laws is vital. As animal advocates, it is our responsi-

bility to ensure that humane officers and other law enforcement officials enforce the laws.

Some states have passed progressive laws either banning the sale of horses for slaughter, or regulating the manner in which they are transported to slaughter. However, the federal government lags behind. Although Congress passed a law in 1996 that would improve conditions for horses going to slaughter, the law has yet to be implemented. (See What You Can Do).

Just like any animal, horses suffer horribly during slaughter, especially when the process goes wrong. In theory, a pneumatic bolt is shot into the head, and the horse dies instantly. However, video footage from a slaughter plant in Texas shows that many horses must be shot in the head three or four times before finally going down.

Most Americans do not condone the eating of horse meat. Yet, every year some 100,000 American horses are slaughtered for consumption abroad, and the number is growing. 🐾

*Liz Clancy Lyons is Director of Special Projects for the Doris Day Animal League, where she works primarily on issues relating to horses (both wild and domestic) and primates, particularly chimpanzees. While much of her time is spent in the legislative arena, she has worked on several field and special projects.*

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Write to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and ask the U.S. Department of Agriculture to publish regulations on The Commercial Transportation of Equines To Slaughter that Congress requested in 1996: U.S.D.A., 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250.
2. Contact your U.S. Senators and Representative and ask them to convene oversight hearings on the slaughter of American horses for consumption overseas.

3. Support the work of equine welfare organizations (see below.)

For more information and sample letters on this issue, visit our website at [www.ddal.org](http://www.ddal.org), or contact Liz Clancy Lyons at 202-546-1761 x 30, e-mail: [liz@ddal.org](mailto:liz@ddal.org).

#### EQUINE WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

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