



## FACTS AND FAQ'S ABOUT HORSE SLAUGHTER

- Last year three foreign-owned slaughter plants cruelly slaughtered more than 90,000 horses for human consumption in Europe and Asia. Tens of thousands more of America's horses were exported and slaughtered in other countries.
- Slaughter is **NOT** humane euthanasia. Horses suffer horribly on the way to and during slaughter.
- Passage of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (AHSPA) will reduce animal suffering hence its wide support throughout the equestrian and veterinary world, as well as the humane community.
- Americans overwhelmingly support an end to horse slaughter for human consumption (polls from Kentucky, Virginia, Texas and Utah respectively show that 82, 74, 72 and 69 percent of those questioned oppose the practice). In California, a 1998 ballot initiative (Prop. 6) banning horse slaughter for human consumption passed with 60 percent of the vote.

### Sick and old horses to slaughter

**Question:** Is it true that slaughter is only a last resort for infirm, dangerous or no longer serviceable horses?

**Answer:** 92.3 percent of horses arriving at slaughter plants in this country are in "good" condition, according to the US Department of Agriculture's Guidelines for Handling and Transporting Equines to Slaughter.

### Neglect and abuse

**Question:** Will horse abuse and neglect cases rise significantly following a ban on slaughter?

**Answer:** There has been no documented rise in abuse and neglect cases in California since the state banned horse slaughter for human consumption in 1998. There was no documented rise in Illinois following closure of the state's only horse slaughter plant in 2002 and its reopening in 2004.

### Cost of caring for unwanted horses

**Question:** If there is a ban on horse slaughter, will horse rescue and retirement groups have the resources to take care of unwanted horses? Should the government have to pay for the care of horses voluntarily given up by their owners?

**Answer:** Not every horse currently going to slaughter will need to be absorbed into the rescue community many will be sold to a new owner, others will be kept longer and a licensed veterinarian will humanely euthanize some. Opponents of this legislation admit passage of the bill will not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of horses sent to rescue facilities, precisely because humane euthanasia is so widely used. It is not the government's responsibility to provide for the care of horses voluntarily given up by their owners, as these animals are private property. Hundreds of horse rescue organizations operate around the country, and additional facilities are being established (a list is available).

## **A safe and humane solution for sick, old and unwanted horses**

**Question:** If slaughter is not an option, what will we do with sick, old and unwanted horses?

**Answer:** Approximately 900,000 horses die annually in this country (10 percent of an estimated population of 9 million) and the vast majority are not slaughtered, but euthanized and rendered or buried without any negative environmental impact instead. Humane euthanasia and carcass disposal is highly affordable and widely available. The average cost of having a horse humanely euthanized and safely disposing of the animal's carcass is approximately \$225, while the average monthly cost of keeping a horse is approximately \$200.

## **Export of horses for slaughter abroad**

**Question:** If there is a ban on horse slaughter in the United States, will there be an increase in the export of horses for foreign slaughter? Will horses suffer from longer transport for slaughter in countries where there may be weaker welfare laws?

**Answer:** Horse slaughter has declined dramatically in the United States over the past decade, but there has been no correlating increase in the number of American horses exported for slaughter abroad. Further, the AHSPA prohibits the export of horses for slaughter abroad, and contains clear enforcement and penalty provisions to prevent this from happening. Risk of federal prosecution and the high costs associated with illegally transporting horses long distances for slaughter abroad are strong deterrents.

## **Standards of care at sanctuaries and rescue organizations**

**Question:** Is it true no standards exist for horse rescue facilities that take unwanted horses?

**Answer:** The Doris Day Animal League and the Animal Welfare Institute published "[Basic Guidelines for Operating an Equine Rescue or Retirement Facility](#)" in 2004. Additionally, the Association of Sanctuaries and the American Sanctuaries Association provide accreditation programs, a code of ethics and guidelines for the operation of sanctuaries and rescue organizations. Horse rescue groups must also provide for the welfare of horses in their custody in compliance with state and local animal welfare laws.

## **Use of horsemeat in pet food**

**Question:** If there is a ban on horse slaughter, will horsemeat no longer be available for pet food?

**Answer:** There is no horsemeat in pet food. This practice stopped decades ago and has some connection to the enactment of protections for America's wild horses in 1971. The US public and Congress were outraged to learn federal agencies were rounding up and allowing the exploitation and slaughter of these national treasures for items such as pet food. Some by-products of the horse slaughter industry are used in various consumer items, but they are derived from the rendering (a different process than slaughter and not affected by the AHSPA) of dead horses and other animals.

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