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OF THE UNITED STATES

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

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Media Matters: Making the Media Work for you

Stacy Segal-Home for Horses 2010



Objectives

- Educate the public and media about responsible horse ownership
- Deflecting false claims/arguments
- Tools for driving the story





Ky. swamped with unwanted horses

3/14/2007 By Jeffrey McMurray, Associated Press

STAFFORDSVILLE, Ky. — The bidding for the black pony started at \$500, then took a nosedive.

There were no takers at \$300, \$200, even \$100. With a high bid of just \$75, the auctioneer gave the seller the choice of taking the animal off the auction block. But the seller said no.

"I can't feed a horse," the man said. "I can't even feed myself."

Kentucky, the horse capital of the world, famous for its sleek thoroughbreds, is being overrun with thousands of horses no one wants — some of them perfectly healthy, but many of them starving, broken-down nags. Other parts of the country are overwhelmed, too.

The reason: growing opposition in the U.S. to the slaughter of horses for human consumption overseas



Horse Population



- Almost entirely controlled by humans
- Driven by an active choice to “want” horses
- Do not have multiple litters of multiple animals
- Rarely show up on your doorstep



It is not a God-given right to be a horse owner or a horse breeder. It is a choice that comes with responsibility.



What are the options?

- Selling to a carefully vetted, private owner
- Lease to another horse enthusiast
- Donate to therapeutic riding center
- Relinquish to rescue/sanctuary
- Humane euthanasia





“There are 100,000 unwanted horses in the United States. If we don’t slaughter them, they will be wandering the streets like the cows in India.”



Understand the Numbers

- 9.2 million horses in the U.S
- Primarily used for recreation
- Approximately 100,000 (1%) sent to slaughter annually
- As the total # of horses in the U.S. has been on the rise, the total going to slaughter has declined





Don't take the bait



- If someone says there are horses running loose, ask for proof.
- If a reporter asks you to comment on an “increase in abandoned horses” and doesn’t have the facts to back it up, don’ take the bait.



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So, what can we do?



Focus on the Need for Prosecution

- Send press release urging for prosecution in cruelty and abandonment cases
- Provide information about the cost of basic horse care and the options for horse owners
- When cases are prosecuted, send a press release





Drive the Story



- Talk about your successes
- Engage your community
- Reach out to your legislators
- Create opportunities for the press and public officials to visit your rescue



Make sure it's the right story



Every time we use the term “unwanted horse” or repeat a story about horses being turned loose in desert, on the range, in Manhattan, or wherever, we are giving credibility to our opponents.



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What can we say instead?



Availability of Slaughter

- Hurts, not helps, horses and people
- Encourages over breeding
- Risks to public health, safety and quality of life
- Hurts American economy





Emphasize the solutions



- Responsible breeding
- Responsible ownership
- Train not trade
- Programs to re-home horses
- Education and equine welfare groups



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Everyone here is part of the solution.



HSUS Resources

- Companions for Life program: Book, posters, weight tape
- Slaughter statistics
- Carcass Disposal information
- Web site resources





Questions?

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