

Homes for Horses Coalition

FACTS AND FAQs ABOUT HORSE SLAUGHTER

- Last year three foreign-owned slaughter plants operating in the U.S. cruelly slaughtered nearly 30,000 horses for human consumption in Europe & Asia before they were shut down under state law.
- These companies and a handful of trade associations that support horse slaughter have contributed to the continued export of tens of thousands of America's horses for slaughter in Mexico and Canada either by physically shipping horses to slaughter or by actively opposing the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. Slaughter is **NOT** humane euthanasia. Horses suffer horribly on the way to and during slaughter.
- The current patchwork of state laws on horse slaughter – including statutes prohibiting slaughter in Texas and Illinois where the only domestic horse slaughter plants operated until very recently – is insufficient. A federal law prohibiting horse slaughter is imperative to ensure slaughterhouses don't simply relocate to states with weaker laws and to prevent horses from being exported en masse for slaughter in Canada, Mexico or further abroad.
- 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.
- According to numbers obtained from the California Livestock and Identification Bureau, since horse slaughter was banned in California horse theft has dropped by over 34%.
- Americans overwhelmingly support an end to horse slaughter for human consumption (recent polls from Kentucky, Texas and Utah respectively show that 82, 72 and 69 percent of those questioned oppose the practice). A recent national poll found that almost 70 percent of Americans support a federal ban. 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 a last resort for infirm, dangerous or no longer serviceable horses?

Answer: No. In fact, 92.3 percent of horses arriving at slaughter plants in this country in recent years were deemed to be in "good" condition, according to the US Department of Agriculture's Guidelines for Handling and Transporting Equines to Slaughter. The horse slaughter industry makes a greater profit off of healthy horses and therefore purposely seeks out such animals.

Neglect and abuse

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

Answer: No. 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 it's reopening in 2004. Since closure of the domestic plants in the earlier part of 2007 there has been no correlating rise in neglect and abuse cases. Conversely, horse slaughter engenders indiscriminate breeding and neglect by providing a "dumping ground" for unscrupulous owners.

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: Hundreds of horse rescue organizations operate around the country, and additional facilities are being established. However, not every horse currently going to slaughter will need to be absorbed into the rescue community. Many are marketable horses who will be sold to new owners. Sick and elderly horses should be euthanized by a licensed veterinarian. It is not the government's responsibility to provide for the care of horses voluntarily given up by their owners.

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 920,000 horses die annually in this country (10 percent of an estimated population of 9.2 million) and the vast majority are not slaughtered, but euthanized and rendered or buried without any negative environmental impact. In recent years approximately 100,000 horses were slaughtered in the US annually, most of them healthy and marketable. If slaughter were no longer an option and these horses were rendered or buried instead, this would represent a small increase in the number of horses being disposed of in this manner - an increase that the current infrastructure can certainly sustain.

However, there is no logic in suggesting that all horses currently going to slaughter would need to be euthanized and disposed of following passage of the AHSPA. Because most horses going to slaughter are marketable animals, many of the horses previously slaughtered would instead be kept by their owners, sold to someone else or placed at sanctuaries following passage of a ban, thereby reducing any impact on the current infrastructure even further.

Additionally, 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: The AHSPA contains clear provisions prohibiting the export of horses for slaughter abroad, as well as clear enforcement and penalty provisions. Risk of federal prosecution and the high costs associated with illegally transporting horses long distances for slaughter abroad are strong deterrents. Ironically, the very organizations most critical of the recent closure of the three domestic horse slaughter plants due to the subsequent surge in horses going to slaughter in Mexico are working to defeat passage of the AHSPA. In doing so, they are working in tandem with the companies that until recently slaughtered horses here and which now are buying horses in the US and shipping them to their plants in Mexico and Canada.

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 Animal Welfare Institute and Doris Day Animal League (now partnered with The Humane Society of the United States) published "[Basic Guidelines for Operating an Equine Rescue or Retirement Facility](#)" in 2004. These and other materials are being incorporated into an expanded sanctuary accreditation program via The Homes for Horses Coalition (www.homesforhorses.org). 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.

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