

Cavel International to rebuild

Horse-slaughtering plant will be reopened in February 2004, creating up to 50 new jobs

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Plans for rebuilding Caval International, the horse-slaughtering plant in DeKalb that burned down on March 31, 2002, have been finalized.

James Tucker, controller for Caval, said no cause for the fire was identified by the DeKalb Fire Department or by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which was brought in to investigate the fire.

Caval, 108 Harvestore Drive, plans to reopen in February 2004.

Tucker said the new building will be more efficient and will be made of concrete panels.

"It will be a much better-built building," Tucker said. "It will minimize odor problems."

Caval slaughters horses for their meat, which is exported for consumption in Europe. It is unlawful to consume companion (non-food) animals in the United States. In some European countries, horse meat is considered a delicacy.

Horses' by-products also go to rendering companies that produce fertilizers, oils and greasers.

Tucker said many people are against the slaughtering of horses, because they are companion animals.

"People think that this is the one major thing wrong with society," Tucker said. "Food is an issue in the world, and the food we produce adds to what people need."

Anmarie Cross, president of Crosswinds Equine Rescue Inc., said many people have a problem with how the horses are transported to slaughter. She said sometimes horses are transported in the same trucks as cattle or pigs, which are too small for horses to stand correctly.

"Horses are used to having room to move," Cross said. "It's like a 5-year-old in a gym stuffed with 1,000 bullies."

Although objectors have tried to stop Caval from rebuilding, Russ Farnum, principal planner for the city of DeKalb, said as long as Caval applies for the permits, construction can't be stopped.

"They have all zoning approval to keep moving forward," Farnum said. "As long as they are in compliance with code, we have to issue a permit – even though people may not agree with what they're doing."

Farnum said Caval will create 40 to 50 jobs for people.

"The jobs are very good jobs and they're well-paying jobs," Farnum said.