

# Fact Sheet

## Support H.R. 503 / S. 311 The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act

Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Ed Whitfield (R-KY), John Spratt (D-SC), and Nick Rahall (D-WV) have introduced H.R. 503 and Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and John Ensign (R-NV) have introduced S. 311 to ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption and the export of horses for slaughter. Last fall, this bill - to permanently ban horse slaughter - passed the House in a landslide, bipartisan vote of 263-146. In September 2005, the Senate passed a funding limitation amendment to ban horse slaughter by a 69-28 margin, and this past April the Senate Commerce Committee passed S. 311 by a 15-7 vote. All three foreign-owned slaughter plants in the U.S. have closed due to state laws, but the foreign-owned horse slaughter industry continues to purchase and haul American horses to slaughter in Mexico and Canada. Our horses are forced to ensure agonizing transport, and once they arrive at the slaughter plant, they are stabbed to death or suffer multiple gun shots to the head.

In May, the state of Illinois enacted a ban on horse slaughter, shutting down Cavel International, the last operating plant in the country. Cavel International sought to delay its inevitable closure by obtaining a temporary restraining order, but this September, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit upheld the State of Illinois' decision to ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption. The two foreign-owned plants in Texas stopped killing horses for human consumption when the Federal 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court determined that a 1949 Texas state law had outlawed horse slaughter for human consumption. The Supreme Court recently denied a cert petition submitted by the horse slaughter plants. With all of the plants in the U.S. now closed, horses are still being transported long distances to Mexico and Canada, making the need for a federal ban on slaughter/export especially urgent.

**Transport to slaughter – and the slaughter itself - is a grim and painful death for horses.** Even though the states have shut their plants, our horses are still being subjected to intense suffering and abuse though transport and slaughter over the border. Undercover footage shows live horses being dragged, whipped, and crammed into trucks in 110 degrees on their way to a horrific form of slaughter in Mexico and Canada. These horses are stabbed multiple times in the neck with a “puntilla knife” to sever their spinal cords. This procedure does not render the horse unconscious, and is not a stunning method. Rather, it paralyzes the horse, leaving him/her twitching on the ground, unable to move or breathe, and then they die from suffocation (because their lungs stop working) or from blood loss and dismemberment.

**Horses are our trusted companions and have never been raised for human consumption in America.** A symbol of grace and beauty, horses have contributed greatly to our society throughout history. They have carried us into battle, plowed our fields, and served as endless sources of inspiration and beauty. Americans hold horses in high esteem and believe they deserve respect and dignity. National polls show that 70% of Americans strongly favor a ban on horse slaughter for human consumption. However, American horses are being killed for foreign gourmands in Italy, France, Belgium, and Japan. Show horses, pony ride ponies, racehorses, foals born as a “byproduct” of the Premarin© industry, wild horses, carriage horses, and family horses are victims of the horse slaughter industry. Americans vehemently oppose the slaughter of horses in the U.S., and we should not allow our horses to be trucked over the border for slaughter there.

**Many horses slaughtered were stolen or sold to killer buyers unwittingly or illegally.** Horses are often unknowingly sent to slaughter, including those stolen and sold for a profit. Logs from all three plants show that hundreds of federally protected wild horses have been slaughtered. Many domestic horses are stolen out of pastures and barns every year for the horsemeat trade. Ohio newspapers recently reported on the theft of two prized former racehorses whose owner had been planning to retire them to an equine sanctuary. Instead, two horse thieves sold the animals for \$250 each to an auctioneer, who then sold them to a killer buyer employed by one of the three foreign-owned horse slaughterhouses. Sky Dutcher, another victim, came to Washington, D.C. recently to tell the story of how her horse, Cimmarron, was stolen from his corral on her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday and sent to slaughter within two days. When California banned horse slaughter in 1998, the horse theft rate dropped 34%. Horses sold at auction and purchased by killer buyers are not sent there intentionally -- their former owners do not know their fate. Slaughterhouse operators want everyone to believe that all the horses they slaughter are old or injured. In truth, USDA statistics show that 92.3% of all horses sent to slaughter arrive in “good” condition – meaning they are sound and in good health.



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## MYTHS AND FACTS REGARDING HORSE SLAUGHTER

**Myth:** Weren't the foreign-owned plants in the U.S. a better alternative than horse slaughter plants over the border?

**Fact:** The plants in the U.S. have all been prohibited from slaughtering horses for good reason- Illinois and Texas do not want any involvement in this barbaric and bloody industry. Undercover footage from inside these horse slaughter facilities in the U.S. demonstrated how horrific these plants were - many horses were conscious when they were shackled and hoisted by a rear leg to have their throats cut. With the closure of all three horse slaughter plants in the U.S., the total number of American horses being sent to slaughter has decreased by approximately 20%, but the number of horses being sent over to the border has increased over 300%. Death at any slaughterhouse is not euthanasia – it is a brutal and terrifying end for horses. We should not allow our horses to be subjected to this tremendous cruelty inside – or outside – of our borders.

**Myth:** This legislation will lead to an increase in unwanted horses and resulting horse abuse and neglect.

**Fact:** A ban on horse slaughter will not lead to an increase in unwanted horses or abuse and neglect. USDA statistics show that more than 92% of horses slaughtered are in good condition and able to live productive lives. In California, where horse slaughter was banned in 1998, there has been no corresponding rise in cruelty and neglect cases, while horse theft dropped by 34% after the ban. Allowing one's horse to starve is not an option – state anti-cruelty laws prohibit such neglect. Most horses that go to slaughter are not unwanted, but rather wind up in the hands of killer buyers because they are in good health and will bring a better price per pound for their meat. Providing for a horse, including humane euthanasia when necessary, is just part of responsible ownership and this bill will not limit owners' rights to sell, donate, or euthanize their horses.

**Myth:** There is no need for this legislation because slaughter is humane euthanasia.

**Fact:** Horse slaughter is a far cry from humane euthanasia. "Euthanasia" means a gentle, painless death provided in order to prevent suffering. Horse slaughter is a death fraught with terror, pain, and suffering. Horses are shipped for more than 24 hours at a time in crowded double-deck cattle trucks without food, water, or rest. Pregnant mares, foals, injured horses, and even blind horses must endure the journey. Once they arrive, their suffering intensifies – our undercover footage of horse slaughter plants in the U.S. demonstrated that conscious horses were shackled and hoisted by the rear leg and have their throats slit. Even though all three plants in the U.S. have been prohibited from slaughtering horses, the horse slaughter industry continues to haul horses by the truckload in greater numbers than ever, where they are stabbed to death in Mexican slaughter plants. When no other option exists, unwanted horses should be humanely euthanized by a licensed veterinarian rather than placed on a truck, cruelly transported and then butchered. The vast majority of horse owners (99%) already use humane euthanasia for their old or ill horses.

**Myth:** Banning horse slaughter undermines private property rights.

**Fact:** Horses are often unknowingly sent to slaughter, including those stolen and sold for a profit. Many domestic horses are stolen out of pastures and barns every year for the horsemeat trade. Ohio newspapers reported earlier this spring on the theft of two prized former racehorses whose owner had been planning to retire them to an equine sanctuary. Instead, two horse thieves sold the animals for \$250 each to an auctioneer, who then sold them to a killer buyer employed by one of the three foreign-owned horse slaughterhouses. Sky Dutcher, another victim, came to Washington, D.C. to tell the story of how her horse, Cimmarron, was stolen from his corral on her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday and sent to slaughter within two days. When California banned horse slaughter in 1998, the horse theft rate dropped 34%. Further, private property rights do not grant owners the unfettered right to abuse their animals. Every state has anti-cruelty laws that mandate protections for animals. Michael Vick would love to claim that his private property rights protect him from an indictment for dogfighting, but that is clearly not a justification for harming animals. Owners will still have ample legal options of reselling, donating, or euthanizing their horse (costs approx \$225 – the amount of one month's keep for a horse).

**Myth:** Ending horse slaughter will cause environmental harm because there will be so many carcasses in need of disposal.

**Fact:** USDA documents that more than 92% of horses that go to slaughter are in good condition – they will not need to be euthanized. Hundreds of thousands of horses are safely disposed of annually by means other than slaughter, and the infrastructure can easily absorb an increase in numbers. Conversely, the operation of the horse slaughterhouses has a very real negative environmental impact, with all three in violation of local environmental laws related to the disposal of blood and other waste materials.

**Myth:** If this legislation is enacted, the federal government will face the financial burden of care for horses no longer going to slaughter.

**Fact:** This assertion rests on the false premise that all horses currently going to slaughter would become the financial responsibility of the federal government. Horse owners, not the government, will remain responsible for the care of their horses. Owners who no longer wish to keep their horses and who cannot sell or place their horses in a new home will have the option of humane euthanasia. The average cost for veterinarian-administered euthanasia and carcass disposal – approximately \$225, the cost of one month's care – is simply a part of responsible horse ownership.