

Fact Sheet

OPPOSE HORSE SLAUGHTER

We oppose any amendment that would enable the slaughter of horses for human consumption to resume in the United States – by striking the bill’s provision that defunds USDA inspection of horse slaughter plants, by substituting language that would allow horse slaughter plants to hire their own inspectors through a “fee-for-service” scheme, or by any other legislation that would allow horse slaughter in this country. Such amendments could add millions of dollars in new federal expenditures for something strongly opposed by the public, at a time when Congress is trying to rein in the deficit.

- The horse slaughter inspection defund language was first incorporated in 2005, following strong bipartisan floor votes of 269-158 in the House and 69-28 in the Senate. Prior to FY06, **USDA spent an estimated \$5 million annually for oversight and inspection of three foreign-owned, U.S. based horse slaughter plants.** It would be shocking for Congress to re-institute such expenditures at a time when so much attention is focused on cutting federal spending and reducing the deficit. It is foreign gourmands that want this product and would benefit from USDA inspection of horse slaughter plants, at the expense of American taxpayers. As Congress works to cut the budget in every possible way, it should continue to prevent the addition of millions of dollars to the deficit, simply to allow our nation’s horses again to be subjected to cruel slaughter to satisfy foreign markets.
- **Americans consider horses companion animals, not animals raised for food.** Americans do not eat horsemeat and more than 70% of the country views horse slaughter as a cruel and unnecessary practice. During Committee consideration of the FY12 Agriculture Appropriations bill, Rep. Jim Moran offered an amendment approved by a bipartisan vote of 24-21 to restore defund language that has been included in the Agriculture Appropriations bills since FY06. This language prohibits taxpayer funding for the inspection of horsemeat and horses for slaughter for human consumption, consistent with the public will expressed overwhelmingly time and again.
- **Slaughter is not humane euthanasia.** It involves long-distance transport over thousands of miles, without food or water, for horses crammed into trailers too short for them to stand upright, so that many lose their balance and suffer injuries. At the plants, horses are particularly ill-suited to the slaughter process – unlike more docile animals like cows, their flight response makes them skittish. It is very difficult to properly stun horses into unconsciousness before slaughter while they thrash about, so many horses are fully conscious as they are hoisted by a leg and the cutting begins. The average cost to humanely euthanize a horse by a licensed veterinarian is \$225, roughly the same cost of feeding and sheltering a horse for one month. This is what the vast majority of American horse owners choose to do at the end of their horse’s lives.
- USDA has estimated that **92.3% of horses sent to slaughter are healthy** and can continue to be productive animals – they are not old or infirm. **However, their meat poses serious risks to human health.** Since horses in this country are not raised as food animals, they are routinely administered substances known to be toxic to humans.



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- Some argue that reopening horse slaughter in this country is necessary as a welfare matter to protect horses from long-distance transport to Mexico and Canada. Their argument is disingenuous on several grounds. First, **long-distance hauls are inherent in this industry**, since there is no domestic demand for horsemeat and not enough foreign demand to make the operation of a widespread array of slaughter plants profitable. Those raising this argument now were silent before, though long-distance transport has always been the norm for domestic slaughter and export for slaughter. Moreover, they have been strenuously opposing legislation to ban export of horses for human consumption, as well as efforts to ban the use of double-decker trailers in horse transport.
- If an amendment is offered that purports to cover USDA's expenses of resuming horse slaughter inspection by allowing industry to pay, through a **"fee-for-service" scheme, we urge your boss to oppose this as well**. Allowing horse slaughter plants to hire their own inspectors would allow the very industry that seeks to profit from horse slaughter to control inspections of its own product, which would adversely impact both food safety and animal welfare. Further, instead of those USDA inspectors focusing on the safety of food that will be consumed by Americans, their time would be diverted to a product that's only consumed overseas. The inspector fees paid by private industry would not cover all expenses – leaving U.S. taxpayers to shoulder the remaining burden. For example, U.S. exports of horsemeat to Europe could not be re-established without developing and implementing a new system to somehow ensure compliance with strict EU regulations adopted since the closure of the last plants here – regulations requiring that no horse presented for slaughter may ever *in its lifetime* have been administered any of several classes of drugs that have been determined to present serious risks to human health, and that are routinely given to horses in this country. And even if somehow all of USDA's costs could be fully covered by a fee-for-service scheme, there is still the fundamental point that the public very strongly opposes the slaughter of American horses for human consumption because of the inescapable cruelty of the practice and the special place that horses hold in our nation's heritage.