

Veterinarians for Equine Welfare

March 6, 2006

Dear Representative:

RE: American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503)

As veterinary professionals dedicated to ensuring the welfare and humane treatment of animals we urge you to support the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503) introduced by Congressman John Sweeney (R-NY), Congressman John Spratt, Jr. (D-SC) and Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY). Each year tens of thousands of horses are hauled all over the US to one of the three remaining horse slaughter facilities (two in Texas and one in Illinois). Injured, sick or healthy, young or old – all are subject to this cruel industry. However, now there is an opportunity to address this before the United States Congress.

Opponents of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503) portray horse slaughter as a form of humane euthanasia, citing the American Veterinary Medical Association's classification of the captive-bolt as “acceptable” for euthanizing equines. This simplistic presentation of the facts fails to acknowledge the vast difference between efficient administration of the captive-bolt by a highly trained veterinarian with appropriate restraint of the horse’s head (the AVMA specifies that the captive-bolt is acceptable “*with appropriate restraint*”) and its improper use by low-skilled slaughterhouse employees without proper head restraint. Improper use of the captive-bolt during slaughter means that horses may often endure repeated blows with the device, and may be improperly stunned as they proceed through slaughter.

Further, this misrepresentation of the facts fails to recognize the immense suffering that horses endure *before they ever arrive at the slaughterhouse*. Federal regulations currently allow horses to be transported for more than 24 hours at a time without food, water or rest, on double-deck cattle trailers, with broken limbs, with eyes missing. These permitted conditions contrast sharply with generally-accepted practices for moving horses in a humane manner. Euthanasia of a horse by a licensed veterinarian is a far cry from the suffering faced by horses sent to slaughter, and it is disingenuous to suggest that the two are comparable simply because the mechanism by which horses are stunned at the slaughterhouse can, in theory, be humane.

Sincerely,

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