



HORSE SLAUGHTER UPDATE

April 2008

September 2006

The U. S. House of Representatives passes legislation that proposes to ban the slaughter of horses. (The U. S. Senate does not take up the measure before the respective session of Congress adjourns.)

September 2007

Citing bans on bullfights and cockfights, a federal appeals court upheld an Illinois law prohibiting the slaughter of horses for human consumption. The ruling could force the closure of the last horse slaughtering plant in the United States. (A few months earlier, Illinois' governor had signed into law a measure banning the slaughter of horses for human consumption, or the import, export or possession of horse meat designated for human consumption.)

The animal rights group the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) was "elated" by the ruling, saying that "the court made it clear this is something that the states can ban."

Two other plants, both located in Texas, closed earlier in the year. A federal appeals court upheld a Texas law banning horse slaughter for the sale of meat for food, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to take up the case. Cavel International is appealing the ruling on the Illinois law to the U. S. Supreme Court.

October 2007

During an interview with the Brownfield Network, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) claims ramifications of shutting down legal horse slaughter in the U.S. are already being seen as more horses are being abandoned and neglected, and that unwanted horses are being shipped to Canada and Mexico, where they are worked, taken to horse slaughter plants and killed under less than optimal conditions, especially in Mexico.

According to AVMA, at many farms, horses aren't being cared for properly and notes that the proposed American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act makes no provision for the welfare of the estimated 115,000 to 130,000 unwanted horses in the U.S. every year. If owners don't have processing as an option, AVMA is very concerned about increasing levels of horse abandonment and neglect and warned of the current crisis occurring:

horses are getting shipped farther distances; worse yet, control of their treatment outside the U.S. and control over their care.

AVMA emphasizes that it does NOT support the position of HSUS, which is pushing for a federal ban on horse slaughter in this country. "Our profession absolutely loves horses, as we love all animals. And, we're not pro-slaughter. What we are is pro-animal welfare and pro-horse welfare...This legislation is not pro-horse welfare."

January 2008

According to AVMA, since all three U.S. horse slaughter operations were closed last year, the number of horses exported to Mexico for slaughter has increased 312 percent.

The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, pending in Congress, would prevent any horse slaughter facility from operating in the U. S. as well as prohibit the shipment of horses to other countries for processing.

AVMA and other opponents of the bill contend that actions of the anti-horse-slaughter coalition, led by HSUS, have led to a welfare crisis. Unwanted horses fared much better when they were transported under government supervision to U.S. regulated facilities and humanely euthanized, the group says.

Farm Bureau Policy

Various sections of the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) current (2008) policy address the organization's position regarding this issue:

We oppose legislation that would give animal rights organizations the right to establish standards for the raising, marketing, handling, feeding, housing or transportation of livestock, horses, poultry, aquaculture, fur-bearing, and canine animals. Standards should be science-based and adopted on a voluntary basis. We oppose any laws which would mandate specific farming practices in livestock production.

We support:

- (1) Legislation and rulings that allow the sale, possession and transport of horses intended for processing or rendering, and to educate the public that equine slaughter is not a cruel practice;
- (2) Domestic ownership, control and location of equine processing facilities;...
- ...(5) Funding for Food Safety and Inspection Service inspectors in facilities that slaughter horses;

We oppose

- (1) The passage of the Horse Slaughter Prevention Act or similar legislation;
- (2) The classification of horses as companion animals; and
- (3) Any regulations that prohibit the harvest of equines.