



ANIMALS' ANGELS

we are there with the animals

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Animals' Angels, an animal welfare organization based in Maryland, last week received over 900 pages of documents and photographs from the United States Department of Agriculture taken during part of 2005 at the Beltex horse slaughter plant in Texas. Documents received 36 months after making a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, reveal an appalling number of incidences and an equally appalling degree of suffering sustained by horses. Evidence indicates alarming cruelty corresponding directly to horse slaughter.



The large FOIA document contains hundreds of photographs that graphically depict horses with open fractures, legs missing, battered and bloody faces, eyeballs dangling and what appears to be horses left to bleed to death. The document provides unimpeachable evidence for the immediate ban on the slaughter of American horses.

The photographs included in the FOIA document were taken between January 17, 2005 and November 17, 2005 at Beltex, the Belgian owned plant in Fort Worth, Texas. Beltex was forced to close this plant in 2007, after courts upheld Texas law that has banned horse slaughter since 1949. Beltex has since focused on its operations in Fresnillo, Mexico where it



continues to slaughter American horses. In addition, Beltex still runs the second largest slaughter horse feedlot in the U.S. Horses from all over the country are transported to the feedlot in Morton, TX before being sent to the Beltex slaughter plant in Mexico.

The FOIA request was submitted by Animals' Angels investigator Julie Caramante in November 2005 "I've been an equine cruelty investigator for a number of years," said Caramante, "and I've witnessed many horrific incidents of animal cruelty. But nothing could prepare me for the images contained in the FOIA. These pictures shocked me to the core. The pain and terror these horses endured is criminal. This just should not be, no excuses."

In commenting on the photographs, Sonja Meadows, Executive Director of Animals' Angels USA said:

"The pro-horse slaughter lobby continues to lobby for the domestic slaughter of horses, railing that transportation and slaughter of horses inside the United States is ever so much better, so much more humane than what happens in Mexico. These people say that U.S. humane laws protect the horses, that Mexico has no such laws. But this rhetoric is now exposed as nothing but disingenuous talk. The FOIA reveals unimaginable suffering was being perpetuated upon large numbers of horses on a long-term basis here in the U.S. We can only shudder at the scale of the suffering over the years. Animals' Angels will be investigating what actions were taken against those responsible for this horrific abuse."

Meadows is firm in her support of a Federal ban of horse slaughter. "From our own weekly investigations at auctions, feedlots and slaughter plants, the barbaric and inhumane treatment of horses goes on and will continue to do so until a Federal law is passed to end once and for all, the transportation and slaughter of horses for human consumption. The horse has played such an important part in the history of the United States and continues to be such an integral part in the lives of millions of its citizens. It is well overdue, past time for Congress to act and to pass a law to bring this miserable trade in horses for human consumption to an end."

Animals' Angels continues to send out its investigators to expose the abuse and suffering of horses and to ensure that those responsible within this brutal industry are held accountable for their actions. "However difficult and traumatic these investigations are," said Meadows, "Animals' Angels will remain true to its motto - *'We are there with the animals'*"

[Further information, video and pictures....](#)

Notes to Editors:

1. In 2007, the slaughter of horses on US soil came to an end when a court ruling upheld a Texas law banning horse slaughter, and similar legislation was passed in Illinois. However, failure by the US Senate to pass the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act into law has resulted in American horses still being slaughtered for human consumption abroad. Tens of thousands are shipped to Mexico and Canada annually, where they are killed under inhumane conditions so their meat can be sent to markets in Belgium, France, Italy and Japan.

Additionally, without the federal law, there remains the threat of horse slaughter plants being established in states that have no laws against the practice. In the beginning of 2008, unsuccessful attempts were made to open a horse slaughter plant in South Dakota. It is likely that pro-horse slaughter organizations will try again elsewhere in the United States.

While a handful of horses are purposely sold into slaughter by irresponsible owners, most arrive at the slaughter plant via livestock auction, where unsuspecting owners sell the animals to slaughter



plant middlemen known as "killer buyers". Despite the fact that the US plants are no longer in operation, killer buyers continue to purchase and haul as many horses as possible from livestock auctions around the country to the slaughterhouses that have now relocated to Mexico and Canada.

On the 24th July 2008, the [Prevention of Equines Cruelty Act of 2008 \(H.R. 6598\)](#) was introduced to the 110th Congress by Rep. John Conyers and Representative Dan Burton. H.R. 6598 prohibits the slaughter of horses for human consumption in the United States and the export of slaughter horses to Canada and Mexico.

2. [Animals' Angels](#) is a 501 (c)(3) non profit organization incorporated in Maryland with fulltime investigators working in the United States and Canada. Our focus is on improving conditions for farm animals. We work primarily in the field, trailing livestock trucks on highways, visiting markets, collecting stations and slaughterhouses.

We seek to cooperate with auction managers, transport companies and other authorities, including the police, veterinarians and the United States Department of Agriculture.



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[Further information, video and pictures can be found here:](#)

[TRANSPORT VIOLATIONS AT BELTEX WARNING - GRAPHIC CONTENT!](#)