August 14, 2003

VIA FACSIMILE

Fax No.: 202 225 2234
No. of pages: 18

The Honorable Charles W. Stenholm
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: HR 857
The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act

Dear Congressman Stenholm:

I am in receipt of your letter of July 29, 2003, a copy of which is attached.

The slaughter of horses is an important issue, and I felt it necessary to reply to inaccuracies and misinformation concerning this issue that you stated in your letter to me.

The horse slaughter industry is not a humane industry that kills only "sick and unwanted horses." These slaughterhouses employ "buyers" who travel all over the United States. They surreptitiously and fraudulently purchase young, healthy horses strictly for slaughter. The slaughterhouses do not want the "old and sick horses that are suffering from abuse." They want the young, healthy horses because that is where the best meat comes from. Tragically, many horse owners do not know that these buyers are purchasing their horses for slaughter. If they were aware of this, they would find an alternative. Because horses are not raised for food in the United States, these buyers must look elsewhere to find a supply and theft is a viable option. Horse theft is a big problem in Texas. According to the California Livestock Bureau, horse theft dropped 34% after horse slaughter was banned there in 1998.

The horses are inhumanely "shipped" to the slaughterhouses by trucks where they travel for days in overcrowded conditions with no food, water or exercise. Once the horses reach the slaughterhouses, the cruel and inhumane treatment continues. The bolt gun very rarely kills the horses on the first, second or third shot. The horses are then shackled and hung by their hind feet, and their throats are slit. Still, some of the horses remain alive while the process of carving them for their meat is begun.

To say that a ban on horse slaughter would increase cruelty and neglect is an insult to our stewardship of horses. Advocates for horse slaughter would have you believe that they are doing us a "public service" and represent themselves as a form of euthanasia, and if they are closed there will not be a place for old, sick or unwanted horses. This is not true. Some of the alternatives include:

- Donating to a rescue organization.
- Retirement farms.
- Donating, selling or leasing to a therapeutic or handicapped riding program.
- Selling to a private citizen.
- Euthanizing a horse humanely.

I have enclosed a copy of John Hettinger's article, "Where Would All The Horses Go?" from the June 28, 2003 issue of *The Blood Horse* magazine. Mr. Hettinger is a most prominent figure in the horse industry. He is the recipient of the Eclipse Award for his humanitarian efforts in the horse industry. He has facilitated and funded the adoption of horses through his Blue Horse Charities. He is the owner of Akindale Farm in New York and the chairman of the Jockey Club Research Foundation, the world's largest funder for equine research. Hettinger was one of the founders of the Racehorse Adoption Program, and a supporter of the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, the oldest retirement organization for racehorses. Mr. Hettinger donated one of his farms, Exceller Farm, to the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation to be used to rehabilitate and retrain retired racehorses for adoption. I have enclosed an article about Exceller Farm for your information.

There is overwhelming support for the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act from the public, the horse industry and humane community, and that support is growing everyday. A partial list of industry groups supporting a ban on horse slaughter includes Texas Thoroughbred Association, National Thoroughbred Racing Association, The Breeders' Cup, Ltd., Fasig-Tipton Co., New York Racing Association, New Jersey Racing Commission, Hanover Shoe Farm and Claiborne Farm.

It is important to note that The Breeders' Cup will be held at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie in late 2004. The Breeders' Cup are the most prestigious races in all of thoroughbred racing. While these races are being held, the fact that two horse slaughterhouses are operating within 30 miles of Lone Star Park is sure to be brought to national attention, and the result will be negative publicity as to our treatment of horses in the State of Texas. Jay Leno, the host of the Tonight Show, has already used the irony of Texas condoning the slaughter of horses twice in his opening monologue in the last two months.

Would you please send to me a list of "prominent horse associations that agree with your position."

I am enclosing a recent survey taken by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research of registered Texas voters wherein your constituents overwhelmingly oppose horse slaughter for human consumption.

Changing the status of horses from livestock is also a non-issue. Nowhere in the bill, news reports or any other source is this issue considered. It is true that horses play a variety of roles in the United States from racehorse to work horse. However, they have never been considered a food animal. As I mentioned in my original letter to you, unlike cattle and hogs, horses are not listed on the New York Stock Exchange Commodities Market as a food animal.

While I realize that none of us are in a position to agree or disagree with horse slaughter for human consumption in other cultures, as a federal legislator you enact the will of the American people each and everyday based on our culture, beliefs and norms. For example, many drugs are illegal in the United States, but are legal in many other parts of the world. The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, HR 857, does nothing to impose the American people's dislike of horse slaughter on other cultures. It simply ensures that the will of the American people is upheld. Other countries can continue to consume horsemeat if they choose. Also, please note that horsemeat is a delicacy in these foreign countries and not a primary source of meat which is a common misconception.

During the last session of the Texas legislature, Texans overwhelmingly defeated horse slaughter. It is my hope that you will support the will of the people of Texas and use all of your legislative power to ban horse slaughter in the United States by supporting the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, HR 857.

Very truly yours,

John R. Murrell

JRM:jj

Enclosures