

Ginger Podojil

From: Ginger Podojil
Sent: Thursday, October 02, 2003 5:46 PM
To: 'avmainfo@avma.org'
Subject: H.R. 857 - American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my understanding that your organization supports the slaughter of our American horses for human consumption for export to Asian and European countries. It troubles me greatly that an organization whose mission statement is **"Improving Animal and Human Health, and Advancing the Veterinary Medical Profession"** would take such a stance.

I'm sure you are aware of the bill in congress that would prevent the slaughter of horses in the U.S. for human consumption (H.R. 857 - American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act). Even though the minds of the AVMA officers are already decided, I feel compelled to share my views with you on the American horse slaughter industry. Please bear with me and read my entire email, and thereafter please give me a response expressing your views and/or rebutting the information contained herein.

1. HORSE SLAUGHTER FACTS

Most horses arrive at the slaughterhouse via livestock auctions where, often unknown to the seller, they are bought by killer buyers working for the slaughter plants. Other horses arrive via unscrupulous buyers and/or others posing as legitimate "adopters" who obtain horses from individual sellers, or donators, through deliberate misrepresentation of their intended use. As a result of the killer buyers and unscrupulous buyers, many of these horses are unintended (by their owners) slaughter victims, as are a number of stolen horses. In the case of killer buyers, they travel from one auction to the next collecting whatever horses they can get their hands on until their trucks are full, and their quotas reached. These killer buyers bid on the same horses as families and other horse enthusiasts, who if were not outbid, would provide loving homes for these horses that end up being slaughtered.

I'm not going to go into the grueling details of how these horses are treated in this process, but let me just say that many of these equines suffer in the auctioning process, all suffer in the transportation process and slaughtering process. They are hauled in double-deck "cattle" trailers which are extremely overcrowded, and not designed for animals with long necks. Stallions are not separated from geldings, mares, colts and yearlings, causing major chaos, injury, and even death. Once the horses arrive to the slaughter facilities, it is difficult to render them unconscious with a captive bolt gun, leading slaughterhouses to slit many horses' throats while they are still conscious. The captive bolt gun used on our horses was designed for cows. This is extremely ineffective because horses have long necks and a natural instinct to flee when frightened. They do not, **and cannot**, stay still long enough for the captive bolt gun to strike adequately. Our horses often endure repeated blows, not just one, not just two, not just three . . . I have seen up to five.

Because of the inhumanity of the transportation process, several states (California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Virginia) have laws banning the transporting of horses in double-deck trailers. And... in February 2002, congress passed federal legislation that calls for a "phase-out" of the use of double-deck trailers by 2006. **I add this to make a point!** Arlow Kiehl is a regular purchaser of horses destined for slaughter. Mr. Kiehl has been arrested in Pennsylvania and New York nine (9) times since 1998, because he continues to use the double-deck trailer even though it has been outlawed. He also has gone on the record as saying that he will continue to use double-deck trailers, even though it's illegal. Why? Because a double-deck trailer can haul 40 horses, while a single decked trailer, laid out and equipped according to Federal law, can haul about 16 horses comfortably. The economics of the double-deck trailer impel him to defy the law. It is well worth it, economically, for Mr. Kiehl, and others, to attempt to skirt the law. The question is, does the implementation of legislation really result in more humane treatment of horses? Not in this case! There is hypocrisy in the system that leads to a lot of good words, but little enforcement. The only way to stop this cruelty is to stop the slaughter.

The way our horses are being transported to the slaughterhouses, and the slaughter process itself, is in no way humane. If you believe it is humane, then perhaps you need to personally visit the slaughterhouses on a killing day, and see for yourself the horror the horses must endure. **Does the AVMA believe these kind of actions and practices constitute Improving Animal Health??**

2. HORSE MEDICATIONS/WORMERS ARE TOXIC TO HUMANS

Horse owners have long been aware of the dangerous drugs administered to race and show horses, not to mention just

regular worming medications for all horses, which are extremely toxic to humans. In fact, I just recently purchased Tucoprim from my vet because one of my horses has a slight cough. On the label there is a warning that states "**Not for use in horses intended for food.**" It is clearly written on every worming medication label, that it should **NOT** be used in horses slaughtered for human consumption. We know that the majority of the horses sent to slaughter in and from this country have been wormed because they are not food animals in the United States. We have no idea what kind of effects these drugs will have on humans who ingest them. Many years to come this may come back to haunt our great country because we are potentially providing meat that is loaded with toxins. **Does the AVMA believe that providing tainted meat for human consumption constitutes Improving Human Health??**

3. SLAUGHTER WILL NOT INCREASE NEGLECT AND ABUSE

The most common argument for those against H.R.857 is that a ban on horse slaughter would result in an increase in neglect and abuse. Their concern over the potential for neglect and abuse has remained consistent and unwavering whether the number of unwanted horses totaled 350,000 as it did in 1989, or 62,000 as it did in 2001. Between 1992 and 1993 the number of horses slaughtered in this county went from 246,400 to 167,300, a decrease of more than 79,000 in a single year! Between 1993 and 1994 the decrease was nearly as steep, 67,000 head. If the forecasts of those supporting horse slaughter were valid, hundreds of unwanted horses would have been keeling over daily in fields and pastures all across the country. In an era of ever increasing concern over animal rights and welfare and intense media scrutiny, wouldn't someone have noticed? The supporters of horse slaughter will then argue that the unwanted horses are trucked off to Mexico and Canada for slaughter. They will argue that closing U.S. slaughterhouses doesn't put an end to slaughter, just merely relocates it. If this was the case, for every unit declined in the number of horses slaughtered in the U.S., there would be a corresponding unit increase in the export numbers to Canada and Mexico. However, available data reveals that the number of live horses exported from the U.S. has remained fairly stable throughout the 1990s. The numbers don't lie. (See Horse Slaughter: An "Unnecessary" Evil, pg. 20 at: http://www.trfinc.org/white_paper.htm).

This the following information in this email is irrelevant to your **mission statement**, but something you should have considered when making you "pro-slaughter" stance.

4. WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC VALUE IN SLAUGHTERING OUR AMERICAN HORSES?

Today, there are only two horse slaughterhouses in the United States, and both are located in Texas. Bel-Tex of Fort Worth, Texas is owned by Multimeat, NV, a Belgian company, and Dallas Crown of Kaufman, Texas, is owned by Chevidco France, Headquartered in Roncq, a suburb of Lille, a city in France close to the Belgian border. These plants combined slaughtered 42,312 horses last year. During 2002, the sales of horsemeat to France, Belgium, Germany and Japan exceeded \$40,000,000. What seems to be the force behind the continued practice of American horse slaughter is the supposed financial gain. Let's compare the economic value if we didn't slaughter these horses and they were instead sold, given away, or placed in a sanctuary.

- 7.1 million people are involved in the horse industry as owners, service providers, employees and volunteers;
- 3.6 million are involved in showing and 4.3 million in recreation;
- 1.9 million people own horses.

The horse industry directly produces goods and services of \$25.3 billion and has a total impact of \$112.1 billion on the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). This is greater than the motion picture industry, railroad transportation and tobacco product manufacturing industries. The horse industry pays a total of \$1.9 billion dollars in taxes to federal, state and local governments. These figures come from a study done by the Barents Group of Washington, DC and commissioned by the American Horse Council Foundation. For more information, please go to: <http://www.highprairiefarms.com/press/TheEconomicImpactoftheUnitedStates.htm>

Compare these stats to revenue of a horse delivered to one of the two Texas slaughterhouses. Is it better for the economy to slaughter a healthy horse or keep it alive and productive? If the 42,000+ horses slaughtered last year were instead introduced back into the economy, the tax base alone would have increased by \$11.4 million. The GDP would have increased by \$69.2 million.

A live horse brings more revenue to our economy than a dead horse. In truth, all horse slaughter does is to provide indiscriminate breeders an avenue to dispose of their genetically inferior horses (if there truly is such a thing), killer buyers, and other unscrupulous people in the horse industry, including horse thieves, an easy way to get rid of horses swiftly and for a mere fist full of dollars. The European slaughterhouses are padding their pockets at the expense of our American horses. The United States doesn't even charge a export tariff tax. Why do we continue to kill our horses? Please tell me who you believe benefits from this practice, because it does **NOT Improve Animal and Human Health**.

5. LEGAL CLASSIFICATION OF HORSES AS LIVESTOCK

In my dealings with the issue of horse slaughter I have noticed that many people in support of this practice do so because they believe the legal classification of horses will be changed from livestock to companion animal, and that horses would not be protected by the regulations of equine welfare. Changing the status of horses from livestock is a non-issue with regard to H.R. 857. Nowhere in the bill, or any other source, is this issue considered. Frankly... even if it was an issue... though all horses have the potential to be classified as livestock, the majority of the six to seven million horses in the U.S. today do not qualify as such. (See Horse Slaughter: An "Unnecessary" Evil, pg. 7 – at: http://www.trfinc.org/white_paper.htm).

I am not uneducated in this issue, and have done a lot of research. I am a Texas horse owner, and I classify my horses as "my pets." My horses carry me, my spouse, my children, and my friends on their backs. They have been trained to trust me... to trust the human race. I feed them, protect them, vaccinate them, and provide medical care for them. In turn, I trust them to be gentle companions to my family members and friends. And guess what... they have honored my trust. There is absolutely no justification for the betrayal of the human species when our American horses (many of which ARE PETS!) are slaughtered so their flesh can be put on the dinner plates of the upper crust of European and Asian countries. Your stance on this matter is mind boggling, and as such, I will never desire to become associated with the AVMA.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ginger M. Podojil
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