

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Horse slaughter

Dear Colorado:

I am writing because I'd like to congratulate you for having legislation introduced that will protect your environment, towns and cities, people and budgets from the entirely negative impacts of horse slaughter.

I was the mayor of Kaufman, Texas, where one of the nation's last horse slaughter plants was finally closed in 2007, and I think it is important and that you would want to know what horse slaughter is and what it does to a place.

Let me explain that as a mayor whose city, in Texas where horse slaughter has been declared illegal, we served as nothing more than a doormat for this unworthy industry, I would like to explain specifically why it is important to consider carefully the effects of its many destructive impacts.

Horse slaughter supplies an unregulated meat product, horse meat for human consumption overseas, with an appalling record and a wholly negative economic impact in its host communities. Why environmental impact? It is because the plants in all 3 locations in the U.S. operating before closure, violated industrial wastewater regulations as much as 100% of the time.

The costs, fines and necessity to build a new, multi-million dollar wastewater treatment plant despite a lack of population growth calculated into planning, are alone significant.

The photo you see here is of an overflowing plant pre-treatment tank. Horses commonly receive drugs clearly labeled as, 'not for use in food animals.' Some say drugs and the lesser amount of fat in horse blood affect treatment of sewage, for both the plant and the City's treatment.



In addition to violations to environmental regulations, horse slaughter thwarted economic development, created significant financial burdens directly indirectly and, once our "dirty little secret" was learned, establishing a broadly negative reputation for my community. It is not good at all to be the place that slaughters people's pets and companions for consumption overseas.

In terms of jobs, horse slaughter is poor pay for dangerous work. The year the plant closed, our crime rate fell by 34%. Positive development is replacing the impacts of horse slaughter.

Some would say that horse slaughter is a “necessary evil,” or a service. That is simply not true. The USDA stats reported that over 92 percent of horses sent to slaughter are in good to excellent condition, less than 10 years old, and without behavioral problems. The conditions and treatment of these horses prior to slaughter are horrific. In a document covering the plant’s operation for just 11 months, the USDA released 900 pages, made up almost entirely of photographs documenting terrible injuries--this is an understatement.

Years after the plant was closed, there were still calls--such as the couple contacting me about horses they had taken to auction. They realized too late that their mares were bought by a self-described “killer buyer” who takes horses to slaughter. Other times there were calls from people whose horses had been stolen. The motto of the horse slaughter plant, “From the stable to the table in four days.”

Given the facts behind this cruel practice, Veterinarians for Equine Welfare unambiguously assert that horse slaughter is in no way euthanasia, but a predatory, cruel business for horses and for people. I hope sincerely Colorado is able to avoid hosting horse slaughter.

Powerful proponents of horse slaughter have tried pushing some state legislatures to pass laws, even promoting taxpayer-subsidized horse slaughter. Please know that tax returns subpoenaed by my City showed that the horse slaughter plant paid next to nothing in federal income tax (\$5 on \$12 million, for example), nothing in sales tax, and have never paid many hundreds of fines totaling as much \$916,00.00. The Colorado horse slaughter ban would save Colorado from this kind of exploitation.

I hope Colorado can see its way clear to support legislation that will ban horse slaughter, and value the towns and cities, budgets, environment, and reputation. This is one of the easier decisions for lawmakers, it is quite simply the all around, right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Paula Bacon
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