

## The Facts: Funding Limitation for Horse Slaughter Inspections

**Background:** The FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act successfully reinstated the funding limitation on horse slaughter inspections, after an amendment was added by voice vote in both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Since 2005, Congress had prevented the commercial slaughter of horses in the United States by blocking the use of federal money for horsemeat inspections. This language was routinely included in the annual Agriculture Appropriations bill after the original amendment to limit the funding of horse slaughter inspections enjoyed bipartisan support and passed by large margins (269-158 in the House and 69-28 in the Senate). The 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act that President Obama signed into law on November 18, 2011 did not include this funding limitation provision, putting our nation at risk of horse slaughter plants opening in our communities. Fortunately, local communities and horse advocates thwarted attempts to open horse slaughter plants in the U.S., and successfully got funding limitation language re-instated in the current omnibus spending bill.

**The horse slaughter funding limitation was passed as part of the “Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015”:** On May 22, 2014, the Senate Appropriations Committee, by a bipartisan roll call vote of 18-12, approved amendment language that would continue the current funding limitation. The House followed suit on May 29, 2014, approving the funding limitation amendment language by a bipartisan roll call vote of 28-22.

### **Long distance transport and intense suffering are inherent elements of this low-demand, foreign-driven industry.**

As long as horse slaughter is an option—within our borders or across them—horses will suffer in transit. Before the funding limitation took effect, tens of thousands of American horses per year (33,000 in 2006) were already traveling to Canada and Mexico for slaughter and U.S. slaughter plants were actually importing horses for slaughter from Canada. When the ban took effect, only three plants were active in the U.S. Given the vast geography of the U.S., any transport of American horses to slaughter—within or outside the U.S.—will still be long and brutal.

### **Horse slaughter, whether in U.S. or foreign plants, is not humane and cannot be done humanely due to the unique biology of horses.**

The captive bolt method of stunning was used by horse slaughter plants when they operated in the U.S. and is used to slaughter most horses across our borders. The captive bolt was not designed for horses, animals that have intense “fight or flight” responses and long necks that they toss when frightened. Their brains are also farther back in their skulls than those of cattle, making the target zone for stunning much smaller. These traits make accurate stunning very difficult. As a result, horses often endure repeated blows and sometimes remain conscious during dismemberment. Captive bolt is the method that current horse slaughter proponents intend to use in the U.S. and they falsely suggest that slaughter can be done “humanely.” It cannot.

### **Despite intense public controversy and scrutiny of this industry, government documents and undercover footage demonstrate that cruelty was rampant in USDA-inspected horse slaughter plants.**

When horse slaughter plants operated in the U.S., USDA documentation revealed horrific suffering: Employees whipping horses in the face and horses who flipped over backwards and were injured due to rough and abusive handling. Documents and photos obtained from a USDA Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA Request 06-108) showed horses in the slaughter pipeline with broken bones protruding from their bodies, eyeballs hanging by a thread of skin, and open wounds.

**Horse neglect/abandonment cannot be attributed to the closure of U.S. slaughter plants because the number of U.S. horses sent to slaughter has not decreased since domestic slaughter ceased in 2007.**

American horses are still being sent to slaughter across our borders in Canada and Mexico. The option to slaughter horses still exists, so any increase in neglect or abandonment can only be attributed to other economic factors. Any downturn in the horse market is clearly related to the economic downturn that began the same year that the last slaughter plant closed and continues today.

**The U.S. saw 300,000 fewer horses slaughtered annually in the span of over a decade (1990 – 2002), yet no abuse/neglect crisis ensued.**

It is also telling that between 1990 and 2002, the number of horses slaughtered annually at U.S. facilities declined from 345,900 to 42,312, yet no increase in abuse or neglect was observed. The number of horse slaughterhouses operating in the U.S. also declined during that period, but was not accompanied by a rise in abandonment or mistreatment. Prior to the institution of a ban in California, this argument was made that neglect and abandonment would rise, but it did not bear out. California banned horse slaughter in 1998 and has seen no corresponding rise in cruelty or neglect cases, although there was a 34% drop in horse theft as a result. Similarly, when a horse slaughter plant in Illinois was closed for a two-year period, horse neglect and abuse actually declined in the state.

***Additional Considerations:***

**Prohibiting federal funding for horse slaughter is directly related to banning horse slaughter.**

Prohibiting federal funding for inspections of horse slaughter facilities is a critical step toward ending the slaughter of American horses for human consumption. Adopting the inspection funding limitation amendment in the FY 2016 Agriculture Appropriations bill would demonstrate Congress' serious commitment to ending the inhumane slaughter of American horses, and would tell American voters that their voices are being heard.

**Horse slaughter plants are economic and environmental nightmares.**

Horse slaughter plants pollute local water, decrease property values, permeate the air with a foul stench and are economically draining and environmentally damaging. The last three horse slaughter plants in the U.S. created only a few dozen low-income, dangerous jobs that did nothing to bolster local economies.

**U.S. horsemeat is potentially dangerous to humans because of the unregulated administration of numerous toxic substances to horses during their lifetimes.**

In the U.S., horses are raised and treated as companion animals. This means that horses are not subject to USDA drug restrictions in place for food animals. Horses are routinely administered medicines that are toxic to humans and banned for use in animals raised for human consumption. The European Union (EU), a primary market for North American horsemeat, requires that all horses presented for slaughter in an EU certified slaughterhouse be accompanied by medical treatment records verifying that the animal was never administered banned veterinary drugs. The U.S. has no means to trace the drug treatment history of horses.

The European Union (EU) banned imports of horse meat from Mexico to the EU as of January 15, 2015 after a scathing audit of EU-certified Mexican horse slaughter plants, which kill tens of thousands of American horses each year. The report stresses that because horses are not raised as food-producing animals in Mexico or the United States, but are instead considered companion animals and partners in work and sport, they are routinely given many medications that are illegal for use in food animals.

**Congress should not subsidize horse slaughter cruelty and divert precious resources away from American products.**

The many millions of dollars necessary to conduct horse slaughter inspections will need to be diverted from inspections of food items that Americans will consume. In addition, the European Union, one of the largest importers of North American horsemeat, only allows horsemeat to be imported from EU certified horse slaughterhouses. European Commission regulations require that all horses presented for slaughter at an EU certified slaughterhouse must be accompanied by medical treatment records. As there is no market for horsemeat in America, it would have to be exported to other countries. Exporting horsemeat to the EU would require onerous USDA oversight – at taxpayer expense – to ensure compliance with the European Commission's food safety regulations. At a time when the nation should be focused on fiscal responsibility, it is outrageous that Congress would spend tax dollars on horse slaughter, a cruel practice that benefits only foreign interests.