



## RESPONSE TO THE HARD QUESTIONS ON HORSE SLAUGHTER

*“Horses are not slaughtered because there is an overpopulation of horses. Horses are slaughtered for profit.” ~ Neta Rhyne, Founder Thundering Hooves*

### FACTS ON HORSE SLAUGHTER

**Over 150,000 American Horses are sent to slaughter every year.**

#### **Who Eats Horse Meat?**

Americans traditionally do not eat horse meat, therefore all of the meat is shipped overseas. The European Union is the primary consumer of horsemeat from the Americas. Other consumers include Russia, Switzerland, Japan, and Italy.

#### **Why are horses slaughtered?**

Horses are slaughtered for one reason — to supply the demand of horse meat to consumers and this demand drives the industry.

#### **Where do most of the horses come from?**

They come from race tracks, farms, Amish and Mennonite communities, riding academies or private owners and are sold at auctions all over the country. Irresponsible breeders continue to saturate the horse market in search of that one champion or specific color combination causing too many horses to end up as so-called “unprofitable byproducts” of the industry. According to the USDA, 70% of horses slaughtered are Quarter Horses.

#### **How do horses end up at a horse slaughter plant?**

This is a two-step process. The first step is acquiring the horse, most commonly at auction by “kill buyers” who buy horses for the sole purpose of providing a steady supply to the slaughter plants in Mexico and Canada – many with direct contracts to fulfill. After being bought by a “kill buyer” horses are loaded onto a single deck trailer and transported to either a feedlot/collecting station or their final destination, one of the slaughter plants in Canada or Mexico.

#### **How do kill buyers treat the horses they acquire?**

Kill buyers are only interested in their profit and the price per pound that they are able to receive per horse. To maximize their bottom line, the horses in their possession will often receive minimal amounts of food and water and no veterinary care. Injuries and illness are left untreated and often grow worse. Strangles, a highly infectious disease, is common in the feed lots.

**Does the USDA regulations in place specifically dealing with slaughter horses and their transport protect the horses?**

NO! While the Commercial Transport to Slaughter Regulations would offer minimum standards of protection for slaughter horses, the regulation is useless due to the fact that there is little to no enforcement. Drastic budget cuts have left the USDA Slaughter Horse Transport Program with less than a handful of employees in charge of enforcement for the entire United States. As a result, slaughter horses are basically left with no protection. Transport times are often longer than 28 hours and the weakened animals inside the trailer never receive water, food or rest. Tragically, oftentimes at least one horse will go down inside the trailer and will then be trampled to death by the others. Trailers are all too often overcrowded, with 35-38 horses of all sizes and genders, including stallions (it is illegal to transport unsegregated stallions). As well, trailers are frequently inadequate and holes in the trailers' sides can cause legs to get stuck and either break or sever completely. The widely used open roof trailers offer absolutely no protection from the elements, and broken pipes and exposed nails found inside many of the more rundown trailers cause some of the worst injuries imaginable.

**Has ending horse slaughter in the U.S. led to fewer options for the disposal of horses, causing neglect and abandonment?**

Absolutely not. Horse neglect and abandonment can in no way be attributed to the closure of U.S. slaughter plants. The number of horses sent to slaughter has not changed significantly since domestic slaughter ceased in 2007.

**Horse slaughter is NOT a humane death or euthanasia. Slaughter should in no way be equated with humane euthanasia. Nothing about the process is humane.**

Upon their arrival at the slaughter plant, some horses will already be "down," unable to rise due to exhaustion, dehydration or injuries. These horses are supposed to be euthanized immediately, sadly this is usually not the case. Regulations require that horses must be rendered unconscious prior to slaughter, usually by a captive bolt. However, due to horses' natural aversion of anything approaching their foreheads, some horses, even after multiple attempts, are improperly stunned. They remain conscious as they are hung up by their rear leg and their throat is cut.

**Horse slaughter was more humane and better regulated on US soil.**

This is a myth propagated by the pro-slaughter supporters. In fact, this has been proven over and over to be a complete falsehood. Pictures with the worst injuries imaginable, taken by USDA inspectors at the Cavel horse slaughter plant in Illinois and the Beltex plant in Texas, are proof that being on US soil was never a guarantee for humane treatment. These photographs demonstrate the true horrors of slaughter and transport as it took place in the U.S.

**Is horsemeat safe for human consumption?**

No. In the United States, horses are raised as companion animals, for sport (such as racing, endurance, rodeo) and for work (carriage horses, farms, etc.), not as livestock meant for the food supply. They are routinely given numerous pharmaceuticals throughout their lives that are prohibited for human consumption – drugs that are in fact prohibited for livestock meant for human consumption. A common drug routinely given to horses is phenylbutazone or "Bute," a carcinogen which can also cause aplastic anemia in humans. It has no known withdrawal period.

## **What can be done to stop this cruel and predatory industry?**

Contact your representatives and urge them to support a new bill (SAFE Act H.R. 113) designed to protect our horses from slaughter.

“It is equally imperative to continue reducing the demand for horse meat among the primary consumers overseas. The Mexico ban was an important step in the process – Canada is next. Animals’ Angels continues to provide the EU Commission with first hand documentation into the brutality of the Canadian slaughter industry and the fraudulent nature of the kill buyers who supply the plants with their horses with the hopes that the EU legislators will make the only logical decision possible: ban all imports of horse meats from the Americas, period.” ~ Animals’ Angels

## **What else can you do?**

Do not remain silent if you witness cruelty to animals. Contact your local law enforcement agency and report any incident. Be as precise as possible – make note of the date, time, the offender, and exactly what happened. Be polite but persistent! Unfortunately, the enforcement of animal protection laws is not usually a priority among many law enforcement officers.

The information for above questions and answers was provided and sourced from Animals’ Angels website [www.animalsangels.org](http://www.animalsangels.org) . The content is copyrighted.

## **References and Sources:**



### **Animals’ Angels On Horse Slaughter:**

While it is true that there are no horse slaughter plants in the U.S. (the last three U.S. horse slaughter facilities, which were in Texas and Illinois, closed in 2007), our horses are still transported over the borders to slaughtering facilities in Mexico and Canada. In fact, more than 60% of the horses slaughtered in Canada and Mexico originate from the U.S. The conditions at Mexican and Canadian plants are extremely poor. AA investigations have documented horrific neglect and abuse time and time again. Among other issues noted, horses have been left to die in pens without assistance, the handling is cruel and inhumane, transport conditions are not acceptable and horses suffer through severe weather.

[www.animalsangels.org](http://www.animalsangels.org)

### **Animal Welfare Institute on horse slaughter:**

- Do not sell your horse at an auction where killer buyers may operate. Consider donating your horse to a rescue organization or retirement farm; donating, selling or leasing your horse to a therapeutic riding program; or selling the horse privately to an individual with proper references and a legally binding agreement that the horse will never be sold to slaughter. Humane euthanasia by a licensed veterinarian is preferable to cruel transport and slaughter.
- Stolen horses may frequently end up at the slaughterhouse. Please report any stolen horses to local and state authorities. Likewise, if you witness an abused or abandoned horse, please report the details to your local animal control authority for further investigation. Not only does such abuse and neglect require immediate attention for the obvious welfare reasons, but these horses are also at risk of being sold into slaughter by uncaring owners.
- Talk about the horrors of horse slaughter and the solution to this cruelty: passage of legislation banning horse slaughter.
- You can also help our campaign by distributing AWI's Horse Slaughter brochure to others; extra copies are available from AWI upon request.

<https://awionline.org/content/horse-slaughter>