

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Congress Switchboard: 202-224-3121

Dear Legislators,

Please co-sponsor and support the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, H.R. 1094/S. 541. The SAFE Act illegalizes sale, transport, and interstate commerce of horses or horsemeat by any person aware of their use for human consumption. It also bans cross-border export of live horses for slaughter. This law would safeguard people from horsemeat laced with drug residue, like toxic meat that slipped into the UK food chain this year.

Repeated polls show some 80 percent of Americans oppose horse slaughter. Yet amid talk of budget cuts, Congress renewed funding for equine slaughter inspectors last year — reversing a six-year ban. Why are tax dollars wasted on USDA oversight of horse kill plants that most U.S. voters oppose?

Americans don't eat horses. Products ship overseas to France, Belgium, Japan, etc. The EU is ramping up regulations in response to phenylbutazone found in horsemeat imports. This will require even more costly USDA supervision. "Bute," linked to cancer and bone marrow diseases, is banned from use in humans and horses killed for meat. Still, the equine painkiller is found in an estimated 95-100 percent of U.S. horses. Eating horses — especially discarded racehorses (among companion, carriage and wild horses routinely auctioned for slaughter) "is about as healthful as eating food contaminated with DDT," asserts Dr. Nicholas Dodman, a clinical sciences professor at Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine and co-author of the peer-reviewed study "Association of Phenylbutazone Usage With Horses Bought for Slaughter: A Public-Health Risk."

No matter how proponents frame it, commercial horse slaughter is cruel. Investigations show horses beaten and crammed into undersize trailers for treks that can last over 24 hours with no food, water or rest. When unloaded, horses are injured, weak or already dead. Some believe U.S. based processing will stop live-horse transport to Mexico and Canada for slaughter. But before 2007, when equine facilities were open in the U.S., tens of thousands of horses still died on foreign kill floors.

Slaughter, abroad or here, is excruciating for these excitable animals. Captive bolt stun pistols, ordinarily used for short-neck animals, fail to render horses insensible. They thrash in pain. Slaughter is prolonged, with multiple stuns, blows and stabs. Some horses stay conscious while killed.

In 2007, court rulings closed two foreign-owned plants in Texas, and one in Illinois. These last U.S. plants had paid zero export tax and minimal income tax. They also harmed the environment. In fact, both Texas and Illinois have since banned sale and possession of horsemeat.

Horse slaughter on U.S. turf is no solution for surplus horses. Horse "owners" set to abandon animals unless they can sell them to slaughter should be prosecuted for animal cruelty, rather than permitted to profit from killing. A GAO report that sought to link increased neglect/cruelty with termination of horse slaughter in the U.S. found no real evidence to back such claims.

If you already support the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, H.R. 1094/S. 541, I thank you. If not, please co-sponsor this key legislation.

Thank you,