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European Union (EU) and Canada poised to accomplish what the US Congress should have done

CHICAGO, (EWA) – Since the 107th Congress (2001), equine welfare advocates across the country have been trying to get elected officials to pass legislation to ban the slaughter of American horses. Polls have consistently shown that the legislation has the support of 70% of Americans, but without fail the bills have been stalled, blocked with secret holds, and left off the legislative calendars. Now it appears the European Union (EU) and Canada may stop horse slaughter before Congress.

Strict new traceability requirements will go into effect July 31st, for all horses slaughtered for consumption in the EU. Additionally, the EU is poised to require Country of Origin labeling of all meat. And finally, the EU has begun investigating inhumane slaughter practices in Mexico.

Despite President Obama's promise to not allow lobbyists to run the country and his support of a horse slaughter ban when he was in the Senate, the agricultural special interests have continually been allowed to prevent the legislation from moving forward. Public records reveal donations from special interest groups to the legislators blocking the bills.

"When it comes to stopping the slaughter of horses, clearly money talks", commented Equine Welfare Alliance's (EWA) John Holland.

Legislation (C-544) was recently introduced in the Canadian Parliament to ban horse slaughter for human consumption, threatening to accomplish what our Congress should have done years ago. It is an embarrassment the EU has to enforce drug policies because our Congress won't stop the flow of untraceable horses that put the health of European consumers of horse meat at risk.

Moreover, it is a further embarrassment that that despite an unending stream of gruesome undercover videos our Congress continues to allow American Horses to be brutalized. The abuse and cruelty inherent with horse slaughter is well known to our Congressional members. The horrific findings of the recent investigations into Canadian and Mexican plants did not reveal anything that wasn't prevalent in US plants before their closure in 2007. A US government GAO report in 2004 revealed improper stunning of equines that resulted in horses being butchered alive. A follow-up to the report noted no improvement and a 900 page USDA FOIA report documented horrible transport injuries and yet, the brutal practice was allowed to continue.

Radical WY state Representative Sue Wallis was quoted in *The Horse*, an equine health publication, as saying the US should be setting the standard for horse slaughter plants. The US already set the standard and it is being practiced in Canada, Mexico and at the US auctions, feedlots and during transport. The US plants also set the standard for the devastating environmental impact on wastewater in the communities where they were located.

Last year, Dr. Tom Lenz, apologist for the slaughter industry and former president of the Unwanted Horse Coalition, visited a Mexican plant and gave it the thumbs up. Less than one year later, they are under investigation by the European Union and depending on the results, could be shut down.

"When a parent suspects a day care center is mistreating children, they don't schedule a visit to observe" said EWA's Vicki Tobin. During a recent interview on *Alberta Primetime* in Canada, humane slaughter expert Dr. Temple Grandin said "I'm sick and tired of going into a place and everything is fine when I'm in there and then it goes bad when the back is turned."

In Canada, the recent investigations revealed that inspectors were not present on the kill floor for three years and were in fear of the workers. The decades of investigations have proven tenfold that horse slaughter is not and never will be humane.

The overwhelming food safety issue alone is cause to stop the export of horses to slaughter. The US has no mechanism to remove horses from the food chain that are not safe for human consumption.

A peer reviewed scientific study, [*Association of phenylbutazone usage with horses bought for slaughter: A public health risk*](#) that traced race horses sent to slaughter for human consumption was published in March in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*. One hundred percent of the horses had received phenylbutazone (PBZ), a dangerous carcinogen.

Subsequently, a study was done in California of Thoroughbreds with 99% receiving PBZ. *The Horse* did a survey of horse owners that resulted in 96% of owners that had given their horses PBZ. PBZ is only one of the dozens of horse medications that are banned in food producing animals.

When Congress and President Bush removed funding for horse slaughter inspections in 2006, it was a clear message that American horses are not food animals. Animals destined for the food chain are raised as such from birth. They do not suddenly become food after years of racing, working, providing service or performing. It is time Congress is held accountable for knowingly allowing unsafe food to enter European markets and subjecting our equines to the most brutal death imaginable.

It is time for Congress to step up and take the lead by passing the 2009 Equine Protection Act before them that will finally shut the US door on this despicable industry once and for all. If Congress does not live up to its responsibility, it is a message to the world about how we regard the health and safety of our trading partners.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with over 110 member organizations. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org