

February 18, 2015

EU ban does little to slow export of US horses

Dear Members,

Equine Welfare Alliance and Wild Horse Freedom Federation continue to monitor the shipment of horse meat from Mexico into the Port of Houston, and then on to other countries. There are two important reasons we are doing this. The first has to do with Texas statutes and the second is related to the recent EU decision to ban Mexican horsemeat.

Texas Ag. Code 149 is a 1949 law that makes the shipment of horse meat illegal in the state of Texas. This is the same law that in 2007 closed down the plants in Texas and the same law that made American Airlines cease shipping horse meat from the two Texas plants. Attorneys have researched the issue and believe that once again this state law is being broken.

An official AG's opinion from the Texas Attorney General's office is clear-cut: these shipments violate Texas law. We are working closely with the Harris County (Houston) District Attorney's office to try to gain compliance.

[\[https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/opinions/opinions/49cornyn/op/2002/htm/jc0539.htm\]](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/opinions/opinions/49cornyn/op/2002/htm/jc0539.htm)

Secondly, the EU food safety ban of horse meat from Mexico took effect January 15. We have been carefully monitoring the shipments through the Port of Houston to determine the effect of the ban on the export of horse meat from Mexico. Since 87% of horses slaughtered in Mexico and shipped to the EU are American, we expected a sharp decline in shipments. This decline would logically be consistent with a sharp decline in the number of American horses exported from the US to Mexico for slaughter and shipment to the EU.

The number of US horses exported to Mexico for slaughter has gone down since the EU ban took effect, but not nearly as much as expected. USDA data shows that in the four weeks since the effective date of the ban, fewer horses have been shipped to Mexico from the US for slaughter compared to last year. However, the reduction thus far seems to be no more than 10% to 20%, far less than the hoped for 87%.

We must, however, realize that the plants may have had an order backlog with non-EU countries and that they could keep their volume up for a while by clearing this backlog. There are some indications that this may be at least partially the case given the most recent reports, but only time will tell.

The last shipments from Mexico prior to the EU ban were not scheduled to arrive in Antwerp until the 16th of February. All of the eight containers were shipped through the Port of Houston in violation of Texas law. Intermeats and Empacadora De Carnes De Fresnillo are listed as the shippers.

Questions remain. Has the EU food safety ban been fully implemented? What will be its longer term impact on the export of US horses? Are other non EU markets taking the horse meat banned by the EU as unfit for human consumption?

What we do know is that two shipments were dispatched from Mexico in early February, after the effective date of the EU ban. The shipments from Empacadora De Carnes De Fresnillo were consigned to non EU countries, Russia and Vietnam. We anticipated continued exports to these two countries, as well as possibly Hong Kong, given pre-ban trade patterns.