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“Unwanted Horse” Producer Pfizer Sponsors Teleconference to Promote Compromised GAO Report

Chicago (EWA) – A long overdue Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the effect of closing the US horse slaughter plants is scheduled for release on Wednesday, June 22. Although the report’s contents are to be kept confidential until released, slaughter supporters have been indicating for months that they were leaked the report and have now orchestrated an “Unwanted Horse” teleconference late in the day of the release presumably to promote the report’s findings.

The teleconference, called “Ask a Vet” is being presented by *The Horse*, the magazine of the American Veterinary Medical Association, a long term supporter of horse slaughter, and features veterinarian Tom Lenz the former Chair of the American Horse Council’s “Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC)”. The UHC, supposedly founded to propose solutions to the excess horse problem, has instead concentrated on promoting the phrase “unwanted horse” to take the focus off of over production, which slaughter actually encourages, and imply slaughter horses are somehow unusable except as meat.

Pfizer Pharmaceuticals sponsoring a teleconference on solutions to the “unwanted horse” problem is beyond brazen. Pfizer owns Wythe Pharmaceuticals, the producer of a line of hormone replacement therapy drugs made from pregnant mare urine and is one of the largest producers of excess, poorly bred and untrained foals in North America.

Every year, Wythe contracts farms to breed tens of thousands of mares so that their urine can be collected to make the drugs. Not only does this process create thousands of excess foals, the drug was found to have devastating health effects on women during a [2002 study](#) by the National Institutes of Health. The company responded by diluting the drug and renaming it.

Viewed as a tactic to stall legislation to ban horse slaughter, the report was requested by Congressional Senate members opposing a ban in the 111th Congress (2009-2010). Slaughter opponents point out that

the closings did not reduce the number of American horses being slaughtered, and therefore could not have affected the horse industry. USDA statistics show the same numbers of horses being bought for slaughter at US auctions now as before the closings, with the only difference being where they are slaughtered.

It was a rude surprise when horse slaughter lobbyist Charles Stenholm spoke at a January conference to promote horse slaughter and strongly hinted that the report would be good for their position. This was followed in a letter sent to all members of Congress by slaughter promoter, Sue Wallis, in which she begged members to delay any votes until the GAO report was released.

When Steve Long, editor of [Horseback Magazine](#), inquired to the GAO about the leak, he was told they were aware the report had leaked, but that he could not see it until the June 22nd. This was almost immediately followed by a denial of the leak from a higher official.

Long told EWA, "It was astonishing that the top press flak at GAO was so unsophisticated he denied his own spokesperson confirmed there was a leak. Generally Washington spokesmen are much more savvy than that and know many reporters tape interviews."

Executives of the EWA and Animal Law Coalition provided information to the GAO lead investigator Terry Horner, but when rumors of the leaks emerged, EWA's John Holland found Horner had effectively disappeared. "Email to Mr. Horner went unanswered, and when I tried to call his office I was given a message that he would be unavailable until June. In June calls resulted in a message that the number was unassigned even though it was still in the directory", said Holland.

The GAO has maintained a reputation for independence and fairness, making the leaking of the report and the implied bias of those who prepared it a potential scandal.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with 172 member organizations and hundreds of individual members worldwide. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org

Tags: horse slaughter, unwanted horse, Government Accountability Office, GAO, American Veterinary Medical Association, AVMA, Unwanted Horse Coalition, UHC, Tom Lenz, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, Equine Welfare Alliance, EWA, Animal Law Coalition, ALC