



POSITION PAPER | Horse Slaughter: The Reality of the Proposed Horse Act of 2009

Equine Welfare Alliance is an umbrella organization representing over 80 organizations and hundreds of individuals across the United States and several countries worldwide.

Prepared by John Holland and Vicki Tobin

SUE WALLIS	HORSE ACT of 2009.
TRANSLATION	UNACCOUNTABLE, IRRESPONSIBLE OWNERS ACT of 2009

SUE WALLIS	Horse owners and concerned citizens from across the Nation have come together with real solutions to ensure the humane care, management, and euthanasia of horses; to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of the equine industry; and to restore the market for all horses. There is no disagreement whatsoever that all animals should be treated humanely from birth through death.
TRANSLATION	Wallis believes horse owners should be allowed to own and irresponsibly breed as many equines as they choose without regard to the future of these equines. When they are tired of them, can't sell the excess or can no longer use them, these owners should be allowed to escape any responsibility though one final act of abuse and cruelty and they should receive a financial reward for this betrayal.

SUE WALLIS	Current federal legislation pertaining to horses, H.R. 503, "Prevention of Cruelty to Equines," its corresponding Senate bill S. 727, are misguided "feel good" bills that at first glance, and to a misinformed, emotionally manipulated public seem to protect horses—while, in fact, they do exactly the opposite. These bills and their horrific unintended consequences institutionalize and codify a miserable, cruel, and barbaric death for hundreds of thousands of horses. Horses suffer from starvation, abandonment, and neglect by owners unable to sell or give their horses away. Ultimately, these bills would spell the end to the use and enjoyment of horses by American citizens.
THE REALITY	<p>Equines are abused, starved and neglected with or without the availability of slaughter. Studies have proven that incidents increase and decrease in direct correlation to the economy and unemployment. The largest case of horse neglect in the US occurred in 2005 when all three slaughter plants were in operation.</p> <p>Any opposition to horse slaughter is defined and grossly exaggerated by anti-horse groups as emotional. The entire HORSE Act paragraph above is a play on emotions without any facts to support these statements. Claiming that the proposed anti-slaughter legislation could spell the end of our enjoyment of equines is an emotional and transparently ridiculous scare tactic.</p> <p>Ending slaughter has no impact on the ability of American citizens to use and enjoy equines.</p>

SUE WALLIS	Concerned citizens who sincerely seek the well-being of horses should understand that animals of all kinds require management and control. No jurisdiction in the country allows feral animals or native wildlife to reproduce unchecked to the point where they have eliminated their resource base and are starving, dying, and destroying the environment for all other species. The same immutable laws of nature apply to horses. To protect people and the environment, horses must be sold, adopted or used by someone who has the resources to care for them, or be humanely euthanized, just like the local small animal shelter euthanizes unadoptable animals.
THE REALITY	The wild horses have been proven by DNA testing NOT to be feral but true decedents of Mustangs that roamed our lands for thousands of years. No scientific evidence has been provided to justify removal of wild horses from public lands. Ecologists estimate the free roaming wild horse and burro population at 20,000. Compared to the millions of privately owned livestock

	<p>on public lands, it is ridiculous to state that wild horse and burro populations are out of control. New livestock leases and lease renewals are granted without proper environmental assessments or any thought to the impact on existing wildlife currently occupying public lands.</p> <p>The 2008 GAO study has determined that the range deterioration was a result of livestock, not horses.</p>
--	---

SUE WALLIS	<p>Euthanasia is defined as a “good death” that is quick, painless and as stress-free as possible. After euthanasia is provided, all legal, moral and ethical obligations for the well-being and care of that animal ceases. How the carcass is disposed of, or utilized, is entirely the prerogative, right, and responsibility of the animal’s owner.</p>
THE REALITY	<p>The recommended method to end a horse’s life by all major veterinarian organizations is by humane euthanasia administered by a licensed veterinarian. Slaughter plants do not administer humane euthanasia.</p> <p>Ending horse slaughter will not remove an owner’s options for disposal following humane euthanasia. The horse can be buried (if permitted in their area), rendered or cremated. The only difference is that the owner <i>will not be paid</i> to dispose of his/her horse and the horse will not endure the horrors involved in the transport from the auctions/feedlots and processing at a slaughter plant.</p> <p>The misuse of the word euthanasia by anti-horse groups and the HORSE Act is an attempt to equate slaughter with a procedure performed by veterinarians. Equines are not euthanized at slaughter plants. The AAEP defines euthanasia as a “veterinary procedure.”</p>

SUE WALLIS	<p>For animals that have been trusted companions, loyal partners, and pets, this will generally mean a respectful burial or cremation depending on the owner’s philosophy and resources. For others the most appropriate option might be delivery to a rendering plant or a landfill. Rendering plants reduce animal carcasses to oils and useful by-products such as soap, glycerin, lubricants, inks, cleansing creams, shampoo, glue, antifreeze, explosives, and paints. Most small animal shelters utilize rendering plants for carcass disposal, as do livestock producers who occasionally have carcasses unsuitable for processing.</p>
THE REALITY	<p>All animals deserve a humane death whether they are companions, work,</p>

	<p>therapy, service or sport animals and the Horse Act does address slaughter as a means of disposal for these equines.</p> <p>The equines in these categories receive care through-out their careers and lives that include many drugs that are prohibited for food animals. These equines have been entering the food chain despite the fact that they have received medications that are explicitly prohibited. The US does not have any mechanism in place to track equines health records or chain of ownership. Horse owners and livestock owners were opposed to any form of tracking (NAIS failed to materialize) for equines. Without a tracking system, there is no way to identify equines that have received banned substances.</p> <p>Failure of the Horse Act to address this issue is disingenuous and ignoring the majority of equines that are currently being sent to slaughter. The types of equines that are being sent to slaughter will no longer be accepted as a food source.</p>
--	--

SUE WALLIS	<p>Because horses are traditional food animals in most of the world, there is a viable export market for horse meat. Many horse owners either need, or wish to recoup the monetary value of their unusable horse, or a horse they can no longer support, and are comfortable with this solution; especially if they can be assured that their animals are humanely killed.</p>
THE REALITY	<p>Equines are not food animals in the US and the US is not responsible for providing a luxury food source to elite diners in foreign countries. We wouldn't think of providing dog and cat meat to Asian markets so why would we provide equines to European markets?</p> <p>According to the American Horse Council, the horse industry earns approximately 39 billion dollars directly and 102 billion dollars indirectly from equines every year. In comparison, horse owners are paid only 3 cents for every \$100 these equines earn.</p> <p>\$300 does not recoup a fraction of the monetary value for the care and ownership of a horse. To suggest so is utterly ridiculous. Horse slaughter is nothing more than an owner getting paid to dispose of his/her horse vs. paying a small amount to humanely end his/her horse's life.</p>

The H.O.R.S.E. Act of 2009 is being proposed to include the following:

SUE WALLIS	Require that all horses to be euthanized must be humanely killed using a method that is approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).
THE REALITY	<p>Both the AVMA and AAEP support humane euthanasia administered by a licensed veterinarian as the preferred method. The AAEP, in regard to the captive bolt states, that the animal must be calm, sedated or humanely restrained – none of which occurs at a slaughter plant.</p> <p>This is another attempt to misuse guidelines that were created by veterinarians for veterinarians to support the slaughtering of American equines. The Veterinarians for Equine Welfare (VEW) have produced a white paper¹ opposing horse slaughter and the use of the captive bolt. VEW is comprised of veterinarians that are members of AVMA and/or AAEP.</p>

SUE WALLIS	Recommend that state and local agencies responsible for overseeing equine rescue, recovery, and retirement operations (that accept unusable and unwanted horses, as well as horses that owners cannot support, for a fee or for no charge), follow AAEP “Care Guidelines of Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities.” State and local livestock agencies should ensure that horses are cared for appropriately and that owner’s stipulations are being adhered to in terms of the disposition of the horses that have been surrendered.
THE REALITY	<p>All legitimate rescue facilities end a horse’s life by humane euthanasia. Once an animal has been surrendered, the owner’s right to make decisions on the horses care, ceases. The animals are surrendered because the owner can no longer care for the horse or they don’t want the horse. Wallis appears to be proposing to force a rescue to send a horse to slaughter or perhaps this is another way of stating that the owner is no longer responsible or accountable except when it comes to sending his/her horse to slaughter.</p>

SUE WALLIS	Tighten the current transport regulations, strengthen the penalties, and provide for the enforcement of violations of the equine transport for processing requirements. Strengthen the provisions that would ensure these laws and regulations are enforced at international borders.
THE REALITY	<p>Every documented incident of transport abuse has occurred within the US borders and with equines going to slaughter pipeline points or to slaughter.</p>

	<p>Ending slaughter will end transport issues and not require additional law enforcement to monitor transport. Owners transporting their equines for show or legitimate sale do not cram 50 equines into trailers built for livestock transport. The owners transport their equines in trailers built specifically for equines that afford sensible, safe transport.</p>
--	---

SUE WALLIS	<p>Require and provide for training and certification for employees at equine processing facilities involved in the actual humane euthanasia of horses prior to processing.</p>
THE REALITY	<p>Euthanasia is derived from the Greek words Eu meaning good and Thanatos, meaning death, i.e. good death. The captive bolt is NOT euthanasia, humane or otherwise in that it does not provide death. It was designed to stun bovines, not kill and does not work acceptably on equines. With their long necks, aversion to objects intruding into their blind spot and recessed brains, equines are far more difficult to stun than are cattle. Equines must be hit multiple times which is in direct violation of the 1958 Humane Slaughter Act. The guidelines on the bolt were written by veterinarians for veterinarians and do not meet the AAEP conditions required as previously stated.</p> <p>Henry Skjerven, director at Natural Valley Meats in Canada stated, "It is the worst four minutes of a horse's life." ²</p>

SUE WALLIS	<p>Require signage at auctions and sales facilities that do not have a \$1,000 minimum bid requirement that indicate that horses sold may be processed.</p>
THE REALITY	<p>Similar signage already exists at many auctions. This does not address equines that are stolen and sent to slaughter nor does it address the kill buyers that buy directly from unsuspecting owners posing as legitimate buyers. Many equines are bought by dealers at smaller auctions and resold to kill buyers at the larger slaughter auctions, leaving the owner with no way of knowing the fate of the equine they have sold.</p> <p>These are several of the circumstances making certification that equines are drug free or have not been given banned substances, unachievable.</p>

SUE WALLIS	Require that sellers to processing facilities present the plant, or a border inspector, with a document stating the seller consents to processing; if they have owned the horse less than sixty days (a "canner buyer"), they must present a similar document from the original seller, unless the horse was purchased at an auction with signage mentioned above.
THE REALITY	Who would monitor the validity of certificate and ownership of the horse? Who would verify that horses taken to an auction or bought directly by kill buyers were not stolen?

SUE WALLIS	Require inspecting horses at the plant, and at international borders, and holding those with lip tattoos or microchips that match numbers or chips that an owner has registered with a national "do-not slaughter" registry. Such horses to be held for forty-eight hours to allow the owner to claim the horse by paying for costs.
THE REALITY	<p>The owner of a horse that has been stolen should not be required to pay costs to retrieve their horse.</p> <p>There is no mention of who will pay for the creation and maintenance of a "do not slaughter" registry.</p> <p>Since many equines pass through multiple owners in their lives, how is the original owner who specified the horse as non-slaughter going to be located in 48 hours?</p> <p>The state of Texas implemented a "brand inspection" program at the Beltex and Dallas Crown slaughter plants specifically to assure that stolen equines be identified and removed from slaughter. The state required the plants pay \$2 per horse to the Texas Southwest Cattle Raisers Association for the service. In the years the program was in effect, no stolen horse was ever saved, though several were later determined from their hides to have been slaughtered.</p>

What the H.O.R.S.E. Act does not do:

SUE WALLIS	The H.O.R.S.E. Act of 2009 does not impede the market, transport, processing, or use of horses in any way. It does not take away the private property rights of horse owners. It does not eliminate the right of Americans to decide how, or if, they choose to market or consume horse meat. The Act will encourage and not defeat the efforts of states, tribes, and private citizens to implement services, facilities, and options for all horse owners. Nor does it impose egregious financial and regulatory burdens on either horse owners or taxpayers to support unwanted, unusable, or excess horses.
THE REALITY	<p>The HORSE Act of 2009 removes owner accountability and responsibility. The Act promotes irresponsible breeding - a major contributor to the excess equines being produced every year.</p> <p>Equines are not food animals in America. In all the years the slaughter plants were in operation, <i>all</i> horse meat was shipped and consumed overseas. There is no market in America and never did any anti-horse group ask that the meat produced be sold in America. This is nothing but another emotional argument by Sue Wallis to promote horse slaughter and create a market that does not exist at the cost of our equines.</p> <p>Ending horse slaughter will not impede the market, transport, processing (for non human consumption) or use of equines in any way.</p>

Summary: Wallis proposes to use tax payer dollars to correct the many intractable issues inherent with horse slaughter. A much better use of the capital required would be to address the cause of excess equines and establishing programs to help owners keep their equines so American citizens may *enjoy and use* them.

With the removal of federal inspections for equines renewed for fiscal year 2010, Congress has once again sent a message loud and clear to the anti-horse proponents that American Equines are not food animals.

¹ http://www.vetsforequinewelfare.org/white_paper.php

² http://www.manesandtailsorganization.org/howling_ridge/Howling-Ridge-July-29-Henry-Natural-Valley.mp3