



September 19, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

John Holland
540.268.5693
john@equinewelfarealliance.org

Vicki Tobin
630.961.9292
vicki@equinewelfarealliance.org

Children at Risk from Slaughter of US Horses

Chicago (EWA) – As Senator Max Baucus and the horse slaughter lobby make a concentrated effort to persuade Congress to reverse the 2007 defunding of USDA horse slaughter inspections, evidence is growing that the main consumers of US horse meat are not likely to welcome the move.

An Irish Veterinary Journal [white paper](#), released in December of 2010, has recently come to light. The paper gives an inside account of the EU (European Union) deliberations that are leading to tough new restrictions on drug residues in animals, including horses, intended for human consumption horses. The new EU regulations clearly define food animals and the risk to humans, particularly children, of ingesting horse meat containing banned substances.

Focusing on one such banned substance, phenylbutazone, the paper outlines the extreme dangers to children and warns veterinarians, "It is a statement of fact that if the European Commission on its audit of this country find evidence of bute use in animals not excluded from the food chain, then the product will immediately lose its license Europe-wide. If samples prove positive for phenylbutazone or its metabolite in equine meat of Irish origin, it will be traced back, and the prescribing veterinary practitioner will be in the firing line of prosecution."

The paper states "The difficulty with phenylbutazone is that it, or its metabolite, can cause aplastic anemia in children. If a child were to consume an animal-based product containing even the minutest amount of bute or its metabolite then the child may develop aplastic anemia."

Horses have always been shipped to Mexico and Canada for slaughter. The closing of the plants didn't save U.S. horses from slaughter as the industry began shipping all horses across the borders. Moreover, phenylbutazone is one of the most popular and effective drugs used in equine practice in the U.S.

In a 2010 paper in the Journal of Food and Chemical Toxicology, doctors Marini, Dodman and Blondeau found that all 18 of the race horses that the study tracked to slaughter had been given phenylbutazone. The study further explains that the drug can take up in injured tissues and be released back into the blood stream later as the tissue heals, and that there is no acceptable washout period for the drug.

Ignoring food safety laws, outspoken slaughter proponent Sue Wallis has declared on several occasions that she wants to feed US horse meat to children and prisoners in Wyoming, as well as the starving children in Africa. Wallis went so far as to sponsor a Wyoming law, HB0122, which would provide that seized animals be slaughtered for use in such state institutions.

European Regulations [(EU Comm Reg No 504/2008] require all horses in Europe to have a passport [tracking system]. All passports issued to horses over six months of age will automatically be excluded from the food chain as will horses with duplicate passports. By 2013, the EU has announced that all third countries, including the US, will have to meet the same traceability standards.

Both Canada and Mexico are instituting tracking programs based on RFID tagging technology in order to meet the new requirements. However, after years of resistance from ranchers and horse owners, the U.S. scrapped a similar program called NAIS (National Animal Identification System) in 2010.

It is a well known fact that horses in the US are not raised or regulated as food animals. The US has no mechanism to remove animals from the food chain that have received substances banned in food animals or any way to trace horses back to the owner(s) or veterinarians that allowed the animal to enter the food chain.

Congress must start taking food safety seriously and realize the risk to the U.S. for knowingly allowing unsafe food into the foreign markets. Horse slaughter in this country is not used for food production but as a dumping ground for owners that no longer want to be held accountable for their animals and breeders that continually produce excess horses that far exceed the demand for horses. These animals should never enter the food chain.

Equine Welfare Alliance calls on Congress to pass the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act of 2011 [S 1176] to protect US horses and foreign consumers.

#

The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with 195 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