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The High Price of Horse Slaughter

Chicago (EWA) - The Equine Welfare Alliance and Animal Law Coalition applaud Rep. Jim Moran and House of Representatives Appropriations Committee members who stood up for the horses this week. Rep. Moran introduced an amendment to the proposed agriculture appropriations bill to make sure commercial horse slaughter in the U.S. remains illegal.

The amendment was accepted by the Committee on a vote of 24 to 21 and it's now on to a vote by the full House on the agriculture appropriations bill on June 15.

The amendment de-funds (prohibits funds from being spent on) ante-mortem inspections of horses to be slaughtered for human consumption. Without these inspections required by federal law, horses cannot be commercially slaughtered for human consumption in the U.S. The inspections have been de-funded since 2006. <http://www.animallawcoalition.com/horse-slaughter/article/1809>

The next step must be a ban on exports of U.S. horses for slaughter for human consumption. More than two thirds of Americans support a ban on horse slaughter. Proponents have avoided discussing what is clear to most Americans - the inherent cruelty of horse slaughter. As Dr. Lester Friedlander, DVM & former Chief USDA Inspector, told Congress in 2008, "The captive bolt is not a proper instrument for the slaughter of equids, these animals regain consciousness 30 seconds after being struck, they are fully aware they are being vivisected."

There is virtually no market in the U.S. for horsemeat and U.S. horses are not raised under the regulations required for food animals. Indeed, horses are given a wide variety of drugs that are not tracked. Phenylbutazone (bute), for example, is given to horses like aspirin. Bute is a known carcinogen and causes liver failure, aplastic anemia and other blood diseases. It is banned by the FDA for use in food animals. Yet, we continue to allow horses full of drugs to be sent for slaughter for consumption as a pricey delicacy by people in other countries.

Slaughter is also not a "service" for so-called excess or "unwanted", abandoned, neglected or infirm horses. If it were, we would have no horses in need because slaughter is still available for American horses in other countries. But a study for USDA confirms more than 92% of horses sent for slaughter are healthy. Kill buyers want the healthiest horses, not old, sick or infirm horses. Slaughter is driven by a demand for horsemeat in other countries.

Slaughter proponents claim that horse slaughter is necessary because there are too many horses, but the irony is that the availability of slaughter creates a "salvage market" that encourages excess breeding and poor breeding practices. In a market where supply is so easily increased, it will simply follow demand.

Among other observations, Rep. Moran made the point that the \$5 million dollars of funding in question would merely prop up a foreign owned industry at US taxpayer expense. In the current fiscal environment, this argument resonated across party lines.

Slaughter represents less than 3 cents for every \$100 of revenue in the horse industry. It has nothing to do with the health of the horse industry. All slaughter has ever brought to U.S. communities besides animal cruelty is environmental and economic devastation. The jobs are few and very poor; the profits along with the "product" are shipped off to foreign owners of slaughter facilities. As Paula Bacon, mayor of Kaufman, Texas when a horse slaughter facility operated there, said, "Our community did not benefit. We paid".

It is time Americans and their horses stopped paying the awful price of horse slaughter. Call on your U.S. representative to retain the de-funding of horse inspections in the Agriculture Appropriations bill.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with 155 member organizations and hundreds of individuals worldwide. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org

The Animal Law Coalition is a coalition of pet owners and rescuers, advocates, attorneys, law students, veterinarians, shelter workers, decision makers, and other citizens, that advocates for the rights of animals to live and live free of cruelty and neglect. www.animallawcoalition.com