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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Extremists Introduce Rash of Legislation against Animal Welfare

Chicago (EWA) – Each year, as state legislatures start their new sessions, there is a rash of new state bills. Invariably, many of these are ill advised, unconstitutional, or even irrational.

Early indications are that this year will prove to be record setting. Not only does much of the proposed animal related legislation violate federal law but it is a clear message from extremists in the Agricultural community of a total disregard for animal welfare and a deep vitriol for organizations that promote it.

The most glaring demonstration is two pieces of legislation introduced by Senator Tyson Larson in Nebraska. One bill, LB 305, calls for state inspectors for horse meat so the meat can be transported across state lines. Larson is a newcomer to the legislature and is probably not aware that his bill would be in violation of federal law.

The purpose of Larson's bill is to bring back a slaughter market for the horse industry which he feels was lost when the US slaughter plants were closed under Illinois and Texas laws. Larson is apparently unaware that the horse market was not affected by the US plant closings since the same volume of horses is being exported to Mexico and Canada for slaughter.

This type of legislation demonstrates the lack of understanding between the horse industry and the meat industry. The horse industry earns its billions from live horses doing what they were bred and raised to do. The income the industry receives for horses sent to slaughter is less than .03% of its revenues.

Moreover, these animals are not food animals and are not raised with the proper controls for human consumption. Rather than address the excess breeding of excess horses, the extremists advocate slaughter.

Yet, Larson's second bill, LB 306, sets a new standard for absurdity. The bill would allow humane societies and horse rescues to be charged with a class four misdemeanor for refusing to accept a horse! In other words, it would punish the very rescues who are trying to deal with the problem of excess breeding while leaving those causing the problem to profit.

This is nothing more than a continuation of the attack by Agriculture extremists on the Humane Society of the United States because of legislation they have promoted to make life more tolerable for food animals.

Larson was a speaker at the recent horse slaughter meeting in Las Vegas so it came as no surprise to see this irrational legislation being introduced. The entire purpose of the meeting was apparently to bash such animal protective organizations and to promote the myth that closing the US plants damaged the horse market.

Virginia delegate Robert Orrock introduced H.B. 1541 that would weaken the care of equines and farm animals (agricultural animals) by allowing water and feed to be withheld unless it would cause emaciation or dehydration. This is quite remarkable in light of the fact that medical science has long established that withholding feed and water causes emaciation and dehydration.

In addition, any animal found abandoned, deprived of care or mistreated would have to be sold instead of being placed for adoption or with a sanctuary. In other words, any animal abused by its owner would be guaranteed further abuse at the hands of the state.

Georgia introduced Sue Wallis' "Food Freedom Act", also known as the "Wallis Road Kill Utilization Act". The bill would remove all regulation of food sold by a producer directly to a consumer. Whole milk, for example, would not be required to be pasteurized. In light of the recent increases in food recalls, this type of legislation only adds to public health concerns.

As 2011 unfolds, it is clear that the extremists in the Agriculture community are going to continue to try to blur the lines between food animals and non food animals and display their blatant disregard for both animal welfare and consumer protection.

Equine Welfare Alliance encourages all Americans to contact their state legislators and voice their concerns over the frivolous legislation and to oppose legislation removing animal protections. For additional information, please visit www.animallawcoalition.com.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with 134 member organizations. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids.

www.equinewelfarealliance.org