



WHO'S ON FIRST?

by Vicki Tobin

The slaughter proponent's arguments bring to mind the old Abbott and Costello routine because you never really know what they are saying. They talk back and forth to each other with neither, understanding the other or making sense.

Each new year brings new arguments and scare tactics from our opponents. When each talking point is disproved, they move on to the next. Every once in a while, they throw a curve ball and resurrect an old argument thinking it just might stick this time around.

We, on the other hand, have been consistent in our message. Humanely euthanize your horse. End your horse's life by humane euthanasia as we do with all non-food animals in the United States. It is the preferred method by all major veterinarian associations. Any competent veterinarian will tell you that. Veterinarians don't carry captive bolts in their medical bags or advise their clients to send their horses to slaughter. Veterinarians for Equine Welfare has an excellent updated [white paper](#) on this subject.

Dr. Lester Friedlander, DVM & former Chief USDA Inspector stated, "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."

When the slaughter debate started heating up in the late 2000s, the argument of choice was; what are we going to do with old, lame, sick horses? Jeez, any responsible horse owner knows the answer to that. Pick up the phone and call the vet.

Next was the argument that horses are livestock. While many categorize horses as livestock, that's not the issue. The issue is that of a food animal vs. a non-food animal. US horses are not raised as food animals but for other purposes. Mounted police are not riding food animals. Therapy horses are not food animals. Race horses are not food animals. The country does not use food animals in military and presidential funerals. Have you ever seen a riderless cow? Dressage, cutting and reining horses are not food animals. Livestock (food animals) do not perform any of the functions that horses perform in our society.

US horses must have maintenance medications that are prohibited in food animals to keep them at peak performance and healthy. There is no tracking of horses as there is with livestock. Unlike

horses, you can trace livestock back to the original farm. It is obvious by the opposition to NAIS last year that owners don't want horses tracked.

This brings me to the "abandoned" horses. If you can't find the owners to charge them for the crime they have committed, how are you going to certify the horses are free of prohibited substances? A horse that has received a prohibited substance can never enter the food chain. There is no withdrawal period. Those are the EU rules and the FDA rules.

We have been warning of the drug issue for years. We were made the brunt of many a joke and constantly laughed at. We were so ridiculously funny, the EU took notice. It is important to note that all current anti-horse propaganda **never** addresses the drug issue.

There have been many scare tactics such as the AQHA release in 2008 warning owners that if the federal legislation passes they won't be able to transport their horse across the street. Senator Landrieu promptly responded with a release stating the intent of the law and we never again saw that argument.

One of the most often used arguments is property rights. Nobody can tell slaughter proponents what they can or cannot do with their property. This is one of the more laughable arguments since there are many laws on the books telling property owners exactly how to dispose of property such as appliances, batteries, toxic substances, cars, etc. There are even laws in certain areas on horse disposal. Owning property does not give the owner the right to abuse the property, especially when the "property" is a living, sentient being.

Now we are hearing how inhumane slaughter is in Mexico and Canada. Slaughter proponents conveniently forget that they never uttered a peep when thousands of horses were sent over the borders when the US plants were open. Why was it okay then but not now? They never mention the inhumane slaughter that took place in the US and dismiss government FOIAs. The truth is that no matter where horses are slaughtered it will never be humane.

They complain of the long distances in travel now but didn't have any concerns when horses were being trucked across the US to slaughter plants and also to plants in Mexico, Canada and Japan. All documented humane violations in shipping have taken place within US borders and yet, they oppose the slightest change to improve conditions such as a ban on double deckers. It is quite obvious; they have no concern for horse welfare, only lining their pockets. There were years and years of investigations and FOIAs of the domestic plants and never was an attempt made to correct anything.

The latest comments we are seeing is that they will start raising horses for slaughter. I'm not sure what type of business model will survive paying thousands on feed for pasture ornaments to bring in revenue of \$300-\$600 per horse from a kill buyer.

This is yet another shining example of their refusal to address the issue of excess horses. Instead of addressing the mess they have created, they're going to start a new population of horses.

Slaughter at all costs! One only needs to follow the rules of engagement to be a diehard anti-horse person.

Rule #1: Never admit responsibility for producing the excess horses going to slaughter.

Rule #2: Call horses “unwanted” so you can blame the horse. Call slaughter harvesting or processing so that it is more palatable.

Rule #3: Never take responsibility for horses you choose to buy or breed and transfer all blame to the “radical vegan tree huggers” that oppose slaughter.

Rule #4: Blame the rescues.

Rule #5: Blame the legislators.

Rule #6: Exploit Native Americans for the few that have chosen to go against their teachings and spiritual beliefs that revere and respect the horse.

Rule #7: Blame anyone that dares to speak up publicly for the horses, make sure you publish a list of these terrible people and call for a boycott. Even include celebrities that have raised millions of dollars for farmers. All people that want horses treated humanely must be exposed. Wait a minute. Doesn't that sound like the organization that they so vehemently oppose? They blast them but when they do the same, it's okay.

Rule #8: Be sure to present all propaganda to legislators with nothing to back the statements but emphasize it as fact.

Rule #9: Create bogus polls and surveys that slant questions and circulate only to those sharing your view. Then, present the results to Congress as the view of horse owners across the country.

Rule #10: State that all rescues are full and become combative when asked for the data to back the claims.

Rule #11: Ignore that slaughter is still very much available and blame all horse woes on the closure of the plants. To fully utilize this rule, under no circumstance, mention or blame the economy. The impact of the economy does not play a role in the horse industry. That is the only industry in America that would not have been impacted by the economy **if** the slaughter plants had remained opened.

Rule #12: Ignore the horrific investigations and FOIAs and always state that slaughter is a good thing. After all, it allows irresponsible breeders to breed and dump so they can breed more. It allows owners that are abusing and neglecting their horses to hide their crimes by having the horse slaughtered. Then, chuckle and whisper under your breath, America's Dirty Little Secret.

Rule #13: Never discuss present society and culture. Always refer to 70 or more years ago when some people were forced to eat horse meat but make it sound like present day and thus, you may be able to create a false market in the US.

Rule #14: Always state, with emotion, that slaughter opponents are trying to change other country's cultures. With even more emotion, state that the horse meat is feeding the hungry in foreign countries even though the hungry cannot afford the gourmet priced horse meat.

Rule #15: Never mention the largest case of neglect in the US occurred in 2005 when all three plants were operating.

Rule #16: Ignore all studies and data on abuse and neglect.

Rule #17: Be sure to always interject the slippery slope. It is your greatest weapon to scare farmers and ranchers into believing that ending the slaughter of a non-food animal will bring down livestock slaughter.

Rule #18: Never mention that slaughter is a predatory, demand driven business and especially don't mention that US plants imported horses to fill the demand when demand increased. In years when the demand was down and fewer horses were slaughtered, just state that there were fewer "unwanted" horses in those years. Don't ever admit that slaughter houses only slaughter the number of horses needed to fill the demand. Let everyone think they are performing a service to rid the US of "unwanted" horses.

Rule #19: Lobby against any legislation for animal welfare, even if it's something you feel you should support. At all costs, even good legislation from any animal "rights" organization for the humane treatment of any animal must be prevented.

and the two most important rules...

Rule #20: Never directly answer a question, especially when facts are requested. Doubletalk and then change the subject. It is imperative this rule be invoked when asked to discuss the drug issue and how unsafe US horses are for human consumption.

Rule #21: Learn the art of spinning. Always accuse the pro-horse advocates of being emotional, attack their credibility and spin the facts. This is especially important when undisputable facts are provided. When footage or photos are provided, be sure to state with authority they are fake or have been altered. Always state that because they are against slaughter that they are responsible for the horses suffering.

Slaughter proponents don't stop at domestic horses. They must target all horses, including our wild horses. Perhaps they haven't read the EU regulations that state that the only wild equidae meat that will be accepted is zebra meat – or did they?

Rule #1: Ignore mitochondrial DNA studies and start calling all wild horses and burros *feral* so they can be shipped to slaughter.

Rule #2: Be sure to send and publish propaganda on how the wild horses and burros are overpopulated and ruining the ranges.

Rule #3: Never, never mention the millions of privately owned livestock that have turned our public lands into a giant feedlot.

Rule #4: Never mention the hundreds of millions of dollars the taxpayers shell out for the private livestock grazing on public lands.

Rule #5: Dismiss and never mention the GAO studies that prove the livestock, not the horses, are ruining the ranges.

Rule #6: Never mention the pictures of the horses that died of thirst laying alongside the fences that cattle ranchers erected to block the wild horses from using the water sources.

Rule #7: Ignore all footage and photos of the healthy, thriving horses being removed from public lands. At all times, state the horses are starving and removing them is for their own good.

Rule #8: Provide your own wild horse and burro population counts. Make up a staggering number and state with authority and conviction the data source is Google Earth and begin circulating and publishing the number as fact in all communications.

The best argument, by far, is that because of the “ban” on horse slaughter, horses are being starved, neglected and abandoned. This is quite amusing since there is nothing stopping anyone from sending their horse to slaughter. 2008 saw the second highest slaughter count since 1995. Shouldn't they wait until slaughter isn't available to make such a statement? In one swooping statement, they disprove their own argument and prove **our** point that slaughter does not prevent suffering.

Why are owners allowing their horses to suffer instead of sending them to the killers? Did it ever occur to the slaughter proponents that owners are holding on to their horses because they fear the horse may end up on a slaughter truck if they sell or donate the horse?

The bottom line is that slaughter proponents don't have a platform. They have no facts or data to back their statements and as a consequence, they continually have to invent new arguments and scare tactics.

It is time to call the ball game. Call your legislators to stop this insanity and ask that they pass the legislation to protect our horses. Pick up the phone and do it now.

Rules added by equine advocates after publication:

Domestic Horses:

Rule #22: Lie with conviction and tell the public that plants will provide jobs and will be good for the state economy. Ignore the \$42M loss by Natural Valley Meats in Canada. Never mention that between the three plants, 85% of the workers were not legal citizens. Under no circumstance ever mention the amount of jobs and income provided by a live horse such as veterinarians, farriers, blacksmiths, supply and feed stores, trainers and pharmaceutical companies. And let's not forget the loss of business to rendering providers. (topic suggested by savethewildhorses)

Rule #23: Never mention the environmental disasters such as the [foaming tank](#) at Cavel, improper disposal of waste and contaminated groundwater caused by horse slaughter plants. Completely ignore the \$180k in fines still owed to the city of Kaufman TX for violations. (topic suggested by Lisa L)

Rule#24: State with conviction that you have support to defeat the federal legislation when in reality, “donations or promises” were made to legislators to stall, block and stop the bill from going to the floor for a vote. (topic suggested by Lin)

Rule #25: Keep referring to and posting false stories of abandoned horses even after they have been proven false by the local authorities.

Rule #26: Introduce state legislation based on disinformation and never mention food safety in horses. Be sure to discredit any speakers that present facts. Simply make something up like they lived next to the slaughter plant and wanted the land and that's why they wanted the plant shut down.

Rule #27: Offer raffle prizes to "help the horses", when in fact, your money will go to humans to be used to lobby for their demise under the guise of a 501(c)(3) that is "educating".