



## Impact Statement

**Issue/Measurable Variable:** The majority of Americans are opposed to U.S. horses being exported to foreign countries to be slaughtered as a food product for human consumption abroad. There are two critical factors that Americans are becoming increasingly aware of within this export process. One factor is the significant risk of contamination of medication-infused horsemeat being reintroduced into our U.S. food supply, and more directly into the EU market, and two, the documented inhumane slaughter methods in Mexico and Canada with long and difficult transports of U.S. horses across our borders to slaughter facilities.

**Impact:** In 2017, millions of dollars, an estimated \$24M-\$57M, were spent by private American citizens in donations for emergency rescue operations to save U.S. horses from transport to slaughter in Mexico and Canada. Due to a lack of funding/defunding and a lack of jurisdiction, USDA is not applying standards, inspecting, or enforcing either the transport or humane treatment of horses at slaughter. The result has been an egregious slaughter system without appropriate U.S. controls and oversight. The primary responsibility for the actual welfare of U.S. horses in the pipeline has been given to a small group of U.S. and foreign slaughter buyers and shippers, and then foreign facility employees.

There have been recent events that may afford significant change, which are a reduction in the U.S. horse population from 9.2 million in 2005 to an estimated 5.0-7.0 million in 2017, along with an overall decrease of 39% in the number of U.S. slaughtered horses in 2017.

The number of U.S. horses exported and slaughtered in January - October 2017 in Canada was 10,017 or -61%, which is down from 25,640 in 2016; and in January - July 2017 in Mexico was 29,000, down from 38,000 or -22% from 2016. The total number of exports for slaughter in 2017 is estimated at 12,273 to Canada and 52,566 to Mexico or 64,839. The number of horses also decreased in 2016 with 75,684 or -9% in Mexico and 30,871 or -22% in Canada, totaling 106,555, a 13% reduction from 2015. 2015 showed 83,077 exported for slaughter to Mexico and 38,843 to Canada for a total of 121,928 from USDA sources.

Additionally, from investigations, the EU withdrew their oversight of Mexican horse slaughter facilities and relinquished purchase of horsemeat in 2014 due to drug-contamination and inhumane slaughter practices not in accordance with EU standards. EU has, also, further enforced in 2017 a 6-month residency requirement in Canada on U.S. horses to ensure that they are drug-free from particularly, phenylbutazone and fentanyl. Some Canadian horsemeat recalls from EU shipments have recently occurred. Equines in the U.S. are frequently treated with drugs, including phenylbutazone, acepromazine, boldenone undecylenate, omeprazole, and others, which are not approved for use in animals intended for human consumption and equine parts are therefore unsafe within the meaning of section 512 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

On September 21, 2017, the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) went into effect that among other trade policies, "guaranties EU's ability to set higher standards for environment and food safety" which includes Canadian exports of meat and poultry to the EU. Canada has also pro-

posed new regulations within the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations for 2-year licenses which can be suspended or canceled that includes persons who slaughter food animals from which meat products for export or interprovincial trade may be derived; traceability of animals with international standards; and preventative controls that meet international food safety requirements.

**Background:** At auctions, slaughter buyers are purchasing horses, at times outbidding the public, and reselling them to the public in a brief window of 1-2 days before shipping to slaughter, with rescue organizations and/or individuals paying an average fee of \$800 per horse. These horses are of any age, lineage, pedigree, or are in-foal and in some cases, have been acquired by the slaughter buyer through misrepresentation of intended destination or by theft. Slaughter buyers have recently increased their purchase of healthy, higher-priced horses at auctions above the \$200-300 slaughter-bound rate to add to their “broker program” for resell purposes to the public. With an increase in regulations in Canada for shipments, slaughter buyers may be staying in business and/or profiting by reselling at prices three to four times their cost.

The horses are transported from a few hours up to 24 to Mexico and up to 36 hours to Canada without water, feed or rest. Serious injury to the horses in transport from other horses and transport employees has been documented, including DOA, from falling and being trampled, eye injuries, lameness, giving birth, and illness. Although the USDA has specific regulations against injury and brutality in 9 CFR 88, Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulations, U.S. officials are not inspecting the horses at U.S. borders or enroute. Several groups have reviewed transport information via FOIA requests, including the Canadian Veterinary Equine Welfare Council which found missing information on the required papers on transport origin and length of transport, as well as some transports with information that showed that they exceeded 48 hours. Current practice in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico on compliance of transporters is voluntary according to GAO-11-228 Report. It was noted that 180 day drug-free status confirmations are also on a voluntary/ honor system basis by transporters.

According to footage at the foreign slaughterhouses, the horses are subjected to repeated stunning attempts with a captive bolt gun, a puntilla knife, or rifle shot prior to slaughter. If stunning fails, which is reportedly frequent, a stick (throat cutting) proceeds with a conscious animal and then slaughter/dismemberment. Both critical procedures of stun to stick require skill and maintained equipment. It is possible that these tools for rendering the animal unconscious are ineffective for use on equines on an assembly-line basis. Canadian and Mexican facilities are not adhering to U.S. single-blow and actual stunning standards for humane slaughter, nor are the slaughter facilities, apparently, uniformly following their own laws.

Although GAO made similar findings and recommended more protection particularly in transport for horses in 2011, GAO-11-228 Report, many of the same infractions and conditions remain in 2016 and 2017.

**Costs:** Estimated annual cost to U.S. private citizens is \$24M to purchase horses from slaughter buyers at an \$800 average fee. If we include the actual costs of the slaughter buyer’s fees with quarantine, veterinarian, feed, and shipping costs as a typical rescue operation, the costs are estimated at \$57 million at a \$1900 average per horse. An estimate of 30,000 annually rescued horses from slaughter is being used.

**Recommendations:** Currently private citizens and nonprofit organizations are assuming the responsibility of taking action and providing funding to save U.S. horses from slaughter. The \$24M-\$57M now profiting a small number of slaughter buyers that is estimated at 50 would be far better used for the care and adoptions of sound horses and humane euthanasia for others. According to an ASPCA report in July 2017, there are 1.2M potential homes in the U.S. with the resources and willingness to adopt a horse.

Breed organizations which are the Jockey Club for thoroughbreds, American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), United States Trotting Association (USTA) for standardbreds and others have the ability to study and recommend responsible breeding and aftercare. Solely the Jockey Club has an existing program to care for retired racehorses. In horseracing in the U.S. in 2017 in a recent American Horse Council report, there were \$1.6B in combined purses with \$15.6B direct value added to the U.S. economy and 241,000 direct jobs.

To sustain our values of the U.S. as a leading nation, we will need to endorse higher standards for food safety and animal welfare by co-signing the Safeguard American Food Act, HR 113 and S1706 in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congressional session.