



Hey Neighbor

# For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

## Action to end horse slaughter

Horse lovers are alarmed about legislation to ban horse slaughter at plants in the United States.

Charles Beatty, lifelong horseman and dealer at Lyndon, questioned: "I love horses and still have 25 broodmares, but what would we do with all of the unusable horses if slaughter plants were closed?"

He responded to his own question: "People will just be turning them loose, because there will be nothing else they can do with them."

Over 65,000 horses are slaughtered for human consumption each year in the

United States, according to Jim Bradshaw, lobbyist and consultant for two Texas horse slaughter plants.

Those plants are Dallas Crown in Kaufman and Beltex Corporation in Fort Worth. The only other horse slaughter plant in this country is Cavel International in DeKalb, Ill.

"These horses are most often sent to a processing facility because they are no longer serviceable, are infirm, dangerous or their owners are no longer able to care for them," Bradshaw explained.

Legislation at this point, passed by the U.S. Senate

on a vote of 68-29, and the U.S. House of Representatives 249-159, denies funding for U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors necessary to certify horse meat for human consumption.

"That legislation has been initiated by animal protection groups including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Humane Society and other emotional pleas to raise money for their cause," Bradshaw insisted.

"If plants do not have inspectors, they cannot slaughter horses," Bradshaw continued. "The ulti-

mate goal of this legislation is to end the slaughter of America's horses for human consumption overseas."

Because the measure is attached to an annual spending bill, it would stop horse slaughter for one fiscal year.

The overall agriculture spending bill still has to go to a House-Senate conference committee and then be signed into law by President Bush.

"Time is of essence," Bradshaw said. "The committee is meeting this week. People who are concerned about horse slaughter being stopped in this country must call their legislators immediately. There isn't time to write. Calls must be made right away."

Telephone numbers for the Kansas Congressional

delegation are as follows: Sam Brownback, 202-224-6521; Dennis Moore, 202-225-2865; Jerry Moran, (202) 225-2715; Pat Roberts, (202) 224-4774; Jim Ryun, (202) 225-6601; and Todd Tiahrt, (202) 225-6216.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, (AVMA), the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and over 40 other groups, including the Kansas Livestock Association, are members of the Horse Welfare Coalition that have expressed concerns about the legislation.

Veterinarian Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, coalition official and AVMA governmental relations assistant director in Washington, D.C., said the amendment would result in unregulated shipment of horses

for slaughter.

Horses would be shipped longer distances to foreign countries, and horses slaughtered at foreign slaughter houses would have no USDA inspection, along with less humane standards.

In addition, Lutschaunig pointed out that the amendment fails to address the long-term placement of affected horses, funding for unwanted horses and environmental concerns related to horse carcass disposal.

The AAEP estimates that basic subsistence care would cost approximately \$1,825 per horse per year, resulting in needed funds of over \$124 million annually, if the legislation is enacted.

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65,000 horses to care for in the first year, that number could be expected to increase by an additional 65,000 annually, with a corresponding hike in cost.

Some of the legislation promoters have proposed USDA grants to assist horse facilities in meeting these costs, but no funds are currently available in the USDA budget to allocate for such needs.

They do not address financial support for unwanted horses that are voluntarily given up by owners.

"Inadequate funding has a huge potential to create opportunities for inadequate care," Lutschaunig emphasized.

The primary options to dispose of horse carcasses, other than processing at slaughter facilities, include burial, rendering, cremation, placement in a landfill and composting, Lutschaunig explained.

However, disposal regulations and methods are state and county issues, and they vary from place to place.

"Not all options are available to all horse owners in all areas, and the inevitable disposal of an additional 65,000 horse carcasses per year will result in environmental problems," Lutschaunig said.

The cost of disposal for a horse carcass varies widely by state, from \$10 to \$1,500, depending on the method of disposal. There is also the possibility of soil contamination from euthanasia drugs in buried carcasses.

Lutschaunig also expressed concern about ramifications of making horse meat unavailable for zoos by closing horse slaughter plants.

"Although it may continue to be legal to process horse meat for zoos, it is very unlikely that this busi-

ness would justify any of the three plants remaining open. The 'big cat diet' is most important to the American Zoo," Bradshaw responded.

Products from horse slaughter plants also go for shoe leather, cosmetics, materials to build certain human heart valves, sausage casings, pharmaceutical compounds, artist brushes, violin bows and many other products.

In its opposition to the horse slaughter legislation, the AQHA has offered its services for members to express personal opinions to their legislators. By going to [www.aqha.com](http://www.aqha.com), Quarter Horse members can type in concerns, and the AQHA assists in forwarding the information directly to Washington.

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202-224-6521

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