

"Oppose Criminalizing Horse Meat"

For the sake of the horse, horse people, and animal agriculture, there are many compelling and compassionate reasons for we, the undersigned, to petition the US Congress and the Administration to allow common sense to prevail and to oppose any effort that would make a felon of any horse owner seeking to sell their livestock for salvage value, or to prevent the re-opening of horse processing facilities in the United States.

We believe that it is the ethical and moral responsibility of any animal owner who is unable or unwilling to adequately care for their animals to sell them, and if they cannot be sold to personally ensure that their end-of-life experience is as stress-free and painless as possible. Historically 1% to 2% of horses sold in the United States wound up in the food chain, and under USDA regulated conditions, even a botched capture bolt death in a kill chute is over in less than one minute, and is far, far preferable to the agonizingly prolonged death of emaciation and disease from starvation.

We also believe that it is an ethical and moral waste of a nutrient dense food source in a hungry world for livestock owners to be prohibited from marketing animals that have historically and traditionally been used for many purposes including food.

Our founding fathers had a keen appreciation for private property. No one disputes that all domestic animals are private property. And yet, state court efforts that closed the last US horse processing plants, and federal efforts to criminalize the consumption of horse meat seek to curtail private property rights. This would be the first time that Americans are prohibited from marketing ANY domestic animal for food, and the complete elimination of a viable export market.

In liberal democracies, governments are usually reluctant to limit personal freedom unless there is an objective, demonstrated public good. In application of this principle of liberal democracy to the horse meat discussion; the USA is a major exporter of poultry, pork, and beef products, so the export of other meat is not offensive. Provided horses born in the USA are raised, transported, and slaughtered under conditions similar to those for beef cattle or pigs, in what way is an American injured by Canadians or Europeans and Asians consuming horse meat? If a claim of injury is made, what is the nature and severity of that injury? There is agreement that horse slaughter is offensive to some; however, when is personal offence sufficient cause in a liberal democracy for state enforced prohibition or the use of force to deny personal choice to other citizens?

It is an immense expansion of government powers to extend into the regulation of the average citizen's diet or, apparently, to attempt to alter the diet patterns of other nations. Most of the world considers horse meat an ordinary food source including our closest neighbors-- Canada, Mexico, Iceland, and South America. Thousands of Americans have immigrated from Europe, Asia, and our neighbors, and there is a thriving ethnic market for horse meat in the United States.

We export millions of tons of beef, pork, chicken and other meats which have all been slaughtered under inspected and regulated conditions. The processing of horses can and should be done humanely, just as it is for every other species of meat animal. If the slaughter of horses is, in and of itself, inherently cruel-- then it follows that the quick and painless killing of all meat animals is inhumane. The elimination of animal agriculture may be the misguided and extremely dangerous goal of a few, but we hope that you will turn away from the culturally bigoted and insensitive audacity of trying to interfere with the culinary traditions and food preferences of the rest of the world.

Prohibiting a horse owner from selling their animals for food is exactly the same as telling dairy owners that they can no longer sell old and unproductive milk cows for beef, or a shepherd that the only legal use for a lamb is wool production and they cannot be eaten. Preventing a livestock business owner from accessing the salvage value of their assets is exactly like prohibiting a rental car company from selling cars with too many miles on them.

Horse owning families of the United States have been devastated by the plant closings. Because there is no salvage market the value of all horses-- 99% of whom would never enter the food chain-- have fallen 70% to 80% to the point where a saddle horse that we expected \$10,000 to \$12,000 for prior to 2007, are today likely to bring no more than \$1,500.

The timing could not have been worse! Just when people are losing jobs and homes-we turn horses from valuable assets to expensive liabilities. It used to be that an owner could sell a horse for much needed cash long before the horse suffered an agonizing death of starvation. Even if you didn't want to risk your horse being slaughtered, you could find an equine recovery organization willing to take them. With more than 10,000,000 horses in the US today and nowhere to go with the 1% to 2% that can't be used, or the owner can no longer support, these organizations are overwhelmed-- and jurisdictions all across the nation have seen the incidence of abandoned, neglected and starving horses triple-- all of whose feed, care, euthanasia and disposal fall upon taxpayers' shoulders because they can no longer be sold to recoup costs.

Therefore, we the undersigned urge Congress and the Obama Administration to protect the private property rights of livestock owners and to oppose legislation that would restrict the market, transport, processing, or export of horses; to recognize the need for humane horse processing facilities in the United States; and not to interfere with State efforts to establish facilities in the United States.

We have sent 6,160 letters to Congress so far. Please join us!

Sign this petition online at

<http://www.rallycongress.com/support-animal-agriculture--oppose-criminalizing-h>