



Legislative Alert: Horse Slaughter Update From Livestock Marketing Association

Status of U.S. Horse Slaughter Plants

A single U.S. slaughter plant—Cavel International, located in Illinois—continues to process and export horse meat for human consumption at the present time. A court order, issued by the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in July, stopped the plant's closure pending a legal challenge to the recently enacted Illinois State law banning the slaughter of horses in the state. Thus the plant remains open for now but for how long is anyone's guess.

The two Texas horse slaughter plants that were closed after losing a court battle challenging a 1949 Texas law banning the slaughter of horses in that state remain largely inactive. Unfortunately, a valiant effort on the part of the livestock industry, including LMA, to overturn the 1949 law in the state legislature failed as well, thus abandoning any hope of re-opening those two plants anytime soon.

Legislation Action in the U.S. Congress

Supporters of a ban on the sale, transportation and slaughter of horses intended for human consumption have met with considerable success to date in the 110th Congress. **The Senate Commerce Committee last April agreed to send to the Senate, S. 311, a bill prohibiting the sale, transportation, etc. of horses to slaughter for human consumption.** While there appears to be little rush to move the bill to the Senate floor, it remains a ghost in the closet.

A legislative measure of greater concern right now is the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations bill. The House Appropriations Committee, in their version of the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations bill, after backing off more sweeping language, included a provision in the bill prohibiting the expenditure of federal funds for the salaries and expenses of USDA personnel involved in the inspection of horses at slaughter. **If the Senate agriculture appropriations bill contains like or similar language, it will be very difficult to stop the closure of the last remaining U.S. horse slaughter plant for lack of USDA funds, during FY 2008, for anything related to horse slaughter.**

Unintended Consequences

A recent media story, "Zoos in a pickle over horse meat", appeared in the *Seattle Times* about the **unintended consequences of shutting down the two Texas horse slaughter plants** and the difficulty U.S. zoos are having in finding sufficient supplies of horse meat for their zoo animals. While some zoos have switched to beef, they find that alternative less attractive as "...horse meat is a leaner meat that better matches what their animals eat in the wild." With some zoos switching to foreign imported horse meat, animal rights activist are now wringing their hands over the possible less-humane conditions in foreign plants and the extra miles horses exported to slaughter in Canada and Mexico will now have to be transported. To those of us in the livestock industry, this is definitely a "well duh!" revelation, but then no one ever accused animal rights activists of thinking with their heads as well as their hearts.

Action Still Needed

With each new win by the opponents of horse slaughter, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain the fight to bring "common sense" to this issue with Members of Congress, our city neighbors and those who choose to see it only as an "emotional" issue and not a private property, animal welfare issue. **Nevertheless we urge you not to give up the fight before the principles of private property and individual choice are won.** Please keep writing letters, sending emails and calling your U.S. Representative and Senators as well as agriculture and appropriations committee members to let them know where you stand on this issue, what it means to your business and why a "no" vote on the horse slaughter ban is a "yes" vote for American agriculture. To contact your Congressional representatives, visit the LMA website at www.lmaweb.com, click on LMA Member News and Information and to the link for contacting your Member of Congress.