The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?

Forum

Revised Proceedings

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SPONSOR RECOGNITION

The **Organizing Committee** included representatives from the following:

American Horse Council,

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS),

USDA, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), Plant and Animal Systems,

Land Grant Universities, and

Professional and horse organizations.

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The **USDA/CSREES** provided funds for proceedings development and publicity.

Preface

Is there a problem of unwanted horses? What is an unwanted horse?

If we believe there are unwanted horses, are there more than in the past? How many is too many?

How can we best promote responsible horse ownership? How do we foster best practices regarding the breeding of horses? How do we educate novice horse owners?

What resources are available for horse owners who have lost the economic means to care for their horses? Are there sufficient rescue/retirement/second career options for all unwanted horses?

Have there been unintended consequences of the ban on US horse slaughter? Could there be further unintended consequences of a ban on all horses leaving the country for slaughter?

What does a person do with a horse they've been unable to sell…to give away?

Can rendering, incineration and burial handle all annual horse deaths?

Is it possible that it is more acceptable to slaughter some horses than others?

Is it possible that there are options more "unkind" than death at a slaughter house? Is there anything "unkind" about death at a regulated slaughter plant?

Is it fair to ask the horse industry to operate as though it is not a business?

It is these questions, and others, that prompted a group of concerned individuals to come together and present the information that you will either hear – if you are present at the forum on June 18, 2008, or that you will read about in these proceedings. Regardless of your perspective, the associated issues are not simple nor will the solutions be.

Welcome

James J. Hickey, Jr.
American Horse Council

On behalf of the American Horse Council, other members of the organizing committee, and today's speakers, I would like to welcome you to today's forum on the unwanted horse issue. I would also like to thank USDA for hosting this meeting and for collaborating with the AHC in preparing and organizing the day.

The forum is entitled "The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?". The purpose of today's educational forum is to try to identify the current circumstances surrounding "unwanted horses," whether there are such horses, and if there are, how many there are, the causes of their being unwanted, and the possible solutions and available options to help them. We hope it will be an opportunity to collectively identify the current situation regarding the well-being of these horses and to discuss solutions and alternatives to deal with them before they slip into the "unwanted" category.

The focus of today's meeting is the "unwanted horse". The intention is to bring people together to seek a greater understanding of the current issues surrounding unwanted horses and horse owners.

In developing the agenda for today, the organizers focused on getting a balanced set of speakers with varied views and expertise. We have speakers from Congress and USDA, from equine industry groups, welfare groups, equine rescue centers, and more. There will be discussions on historical and ethical perspectives of the situation, what is fact and what is fiction, the Federal role in creating viable solutions to the issue, transportation issues, and potential solutions and options for unwanted horses.

The USDA, AHC and our speakers hope that today will be an opportunity for all in attendance to come together and discuss our concern for the unwanted horse, to share information, and discuss solutions to benefit the well-being of these horses. We hope it will provide the will for all of us to leave here and continue our efforts, collectively and individually, to erase the term "unwanted horse" from the equine vocabulary.

Thank you for your interest and thank you for coming.

The Historical Perspectives of the Unwanted Horse

Nat T. Messer IV
University of Missouri
Unwanted Horse Coalition and
American Veterinary Medical Association

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The current plight of the unwanted horse in the United States has been directly impacted by various recent state legislative actions. The legislation was most likely intended to be in the horse's best interests, but it has brought about unintended consequences that now appear to be having a negative impact on the welfare of these horses. This would not be the first time that mandated legislation has had good intentions, but ultimately resulted in some unexpected consequences that adversely affected the welfare of horses. One only has to look at such pieces of legislation as the Wild Horse and Burro Protection Act of 1971, the Horse Protection Act of 1970 and the Amended Horse Protection Act of 1976, the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, and the Commercial Transport to Slaughter Act to see that even the best laid plans don't always accomplish their true goals. So, as we address the plight of unwanted horses, it is particularly important to reflect on the past so as to avoid similar ill-fated legislative efforts when it comes to what the future brings for the unwanted horse.

"Unwanted horses" represent a subset of horses within the domestic equine population determined by someone to be no longer needed or useful, or their owners are no longer interested in or capable of providing care for them either physically or financially. Until 2007, most unwanted horses were likely sent to slaughter with fewer numbers being rescued / rehabilitated, euthanized and disposed of through rendering, burial, discarded at landfills, or composted, with still fewer simply abandoned and left to die of natural causes. Since the closure of all of the US slaughter plants, a significant and increasing number of unwanted horses are being exported to Canada and Mexico for slaughter.

Within the horse industry there are always going to be unwanted horses. If you think about it, whenever a horse is sold, the seller didn't want the horse any longer. If the sale is successful then that horse is no longer unwanted, but if there is no sale the horse remains unwanted. Unwanted horses range from being essentially normal, healthy horses of varying ages and breeds to horses with some type of disability or infirmity; horses that are unattractive; horses that fail to meet their owner's expectations for their intended use (e.g., athletic ability); horses with non-life-threatening diseases; horses that have behavioral problems; or horses that are truly mean or dangerous. In many cases, these horses have had multiple owners, have been shipped from one sale barn, stable, or farm to another, and have ultimately been rejected as eligible for any sort of responsible, long-term care.

For the past 15 years and up until 2007, approximately 1-2% (75-150,000 horses) of the domestic equine population, on average, in the United States was sent to slaughter each year, with another 10-20,000 horses each year being exported to Canada for slaughter during this same period of time, and, an unknown number of horses being sent to Mexico for that purpose as well (~ 6,500

in 2005; 12,000 in 2006; 45,000 in 2007) (1). In 1997, slightly more than 1% of the domestic equine population was sent to slaughter (approx. 72,000 horses). In comparison, according to the 1998 NAHMS Report (2), 1.3% of horses age 6 months to 20 years (approx 80,500 horses) on all premises surveyed either died or were euthanized in 1997, while 11.1% of horses greater than 20 years of age (approx. 55,000 horses) on all premises surveyed either died or were euthanized in 1997. Assuming these numbers are at least somewhat representative of what occurs annually, then nearly 100 horses either die or are euthanized for every 50 horses that go to slaughter and at least 200,000 equine carcasses must be disposed of annually, one-third of which were being processed for human consumption until 2007, with the remainder being cremated, buried, "digested", disposed of in landfills, or rendered.

When the number of unwanted horses are combined with the 20,000 + feral horses deemed to be un-adoptable (or unwanted) that are being maintained by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on privately owned sanctuaries, plus 6 - 8,000 horses being held in short-term holding facilities operated by the BLM awaiting adoption (temporarily unwanted), and an unknown but significant number of horses housed at rescue and retirement facilities waiting for a new owner, one can readily see that the number of truly and/or potentially unwanted horses constitutes a significant number of horses to be dealt with each year and in the future.

To their credit, various equine welfare organizations, breed-specific organizations, and numerous benevolent equine welfare advocates and horse owners have made a conscientious and concerted effort to either provide care for unwanted horses, provide funding for the care of unwanted horses, or to find suitable accommodations for them in both the private and public sector. These efforts, along with widespread efforts to inform the public about the plight of the unwanted horse, fewer slaughter plants operating in the United States, changes to the IRS tax code, and a relatively high demand for horses by prospective buyers presumably accounts for the decrease in the number of horses being sent to slaughter over the past 5-10 years. The carrying capacity for these retirement farms, rescue farms, and sanctuaries, as they are called, is unknown at this point, but despite their noble efforts to provide care for many unwanted horses, the number of unwanted horses far exceeds the resources currently available to accommodate them all. Even well-meaning volunteers can become overburdened with unwanted horses, at times to the detriment of the horses under their care. There simply are not enough volunteers, funding, or placement opportunities for all of the unwanted horses. And, since the closure of all US slaughter plants in 2007, the burden has increased substantially.

Why are there so many apparently unwanted horses? Is there, as some would suggest, a glut of horses in the United States today? Was there, then, an even larger glut of horses when 200-300,000 horses were being sent to slaughter in the early '90's? The horse industry depends, to a large extent, on the buying and selling of horses. It also depends on being profitable. Without demand from buyers and supply from sellers, the horse industry would not exist. For the past 5-10 years, the demand for horses on the part of those buying horses has been very good. Over the years, however, this demand has certainly run in cycles that frequently follow other economic trends. In general, when the demand for horses is low, then the number of unwanted horse's increases, regardless of what their bloodlines may be. Recent changes in various breed organization's rules, such as permitting the use of embryo transfer and frozen semen, have favored the production of horses, allowing breeders to produce more than one offspring per year from mares, and allowing breeders to more efficiently select for horses with desirable bloodlines

or performance records. New technology will further facilitate this practice in the future. Unfortunately, even with the help of technological advances, not every mating will produce a horse that meets the expectations of a buyer. For those in the business of breeding and raising horses, an unsold horse becomes a liability rather than an asset.
Currently, to the author's knowledge, there is a lack of information about the demographics of unwanted horses other than the generalizations made previously, (i.e., not marketable, disabled or infirm, unattractive, lacking athletic ability, dangerous or mean). According to United States Department of Agriculture statistics, the horses going to slaughter basically follow the demographics of the horse population in general, i.e., nearly equal numbers of mares and geldings, primarily Quarter Horses followed by the other breeds ranked in order of their relative numbers in the general horse population. A more detailed study investigating the demographics of horses deemed to be unwanted would allow the horse industry to focus more appropriately on the problem. For example, former racehorses are frequently singled out as examples of unwanted horses when their racing careers end and they are not candidates for breeding or other athletic endeavors. There are undocumented estimates suggesting that less than 10% of the horses that go to slaughter are Thoroughbreds, but just how many of the 100,000 + horses that went to slaughter last year in the US and Canada were former racehorses? What is the average age and sex of those unwanted horses? What are the types of things that cause them to be unwanted? Are they purebred or grade horses? Answers to questions such as these and many more need to be addressed to be able to understand the problem and potentially reduce the number of unwanted horses.

Whenever there are large numbers of unwanted horses as there are today, there is always concern for the welfare of these horses. However, even though there appears to be an increase in the reports of equine abuse and neglect (3), there is no reliable way to document the actual number of these instances of abuse or neglect, other than what can be read in the news. Neglect of horses takes many forms and is due to a variety of factors. Could this upsurge in neglect be due solely to an increasing number of uninformed horse owners unfamiliar with the proper care of horses or could it be due purely to economic constraints created by the downturn in the economy since 9/11? Or, could it be due to the availability of affordable ways to responsibly dispose of unwanted horses brought about by regulations prohibiting burial of animal carcasses in some locales, costs associated with veterinary euthanasia and disposal by cremation, "digestion" or rendering, and closure of existing slaughter plants processing horses for human consumption? All of these factors must be considered when faced with such a large number of unwanted horses and what should be done with them, always ensuring they are treated humanely and with dignity until the end of their lives. It is important for all of us to remember that, in all likelihood, it only matters to us, and not the horse, what happens to them after they are gone.

There are on-going efforts on the part of certain equine advocacy groups to get Congress to pass legislation to ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption in the United States as well as the export of horses for this purpose. Bills have been introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate which would ban slaughter as well as the exportation of horses for slaughter. The House of Representatives passed their version of the bill unanimously in 2006. However, through all of this legislative activity, there has been no legislation proposed that would provide for the care and welfare of the 70 – 80,000 horses that have been sent to slaughter each year in the past several years should slaughter be outlawed. If slaughter or transport/export for slaughter is outlawed, what will happen to those horses? Will the owners who didn't want those

horses suddenly have a change of heart? Or will they simply neglect them or abuse them? In an effort to appease the advocacy groups, haven't the legislators in support of this legislation completely ignored the welfare of the unwanted horse by not assuring there is an infrastructure in place to care for these horses? Many seem to believe that if slaughter is banned, the problem will go away.

Fortunately, the American Association of Equine Practitioners initiated discussions about the plight of the unwanted horse in 2004 by sponsoring an Unwanted Horse Summit in Washington, DC. In attendance were members of AAEP, representatives from the horse industry and breed organizations, representatives of the animal welfare advocacy groups and representatives from the USDA and Congress. From that Summit was formed the Unwanted Horse Coalition. The Unwanted Horse Coalition was "adopted" by the American Horse Council and this coalition of horse industry organizations, veterinarians, and animal welfare organizations will oversee initiatives to educate horse owners to "own responsibly" and help identify solutions to the problem of unwanted horses. It will be through these sorts of discussions that solutions will be found to address the needs of the unwanted horse, not by passing, under pressure from advocacy groups, some ill-conceived legislation before there is a plan to care for so many unwanted horses. Let's not repeat some of the mistakes from the past when it comes to mandated legislation.

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Ethical Perspectives on the Unwanted Horse Issue & the US Ban on Equine Slaughter

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Though our conversations today are slated to discuss the issue of unwanted horses versus the US ban on equine slaughter, my feeling is that one cannot be separated from the other. We will hear varying viewpoints on these topics today, and multiple interpretations of the facts and perceptions related to these items. I encourage you to listen closely to all of them before coming to your own conclusion. It is a highly emotional issue fraught with intense feelings.

BACKGROUND

I want to start by letting you know the issue of equine slaughter has been a controversial and emotional topic for me for well over 30 years. I was raised on a small, family-run horse farm. My father was a high school biology teacher; my mother was a school librarian. The goal of our farm was to generate enough income to pay for the costs of our family's personal horses and their correlated showing costs. To that end, we trained horses of all breeds, raised some Arabians and half-Arabians, gave riding lessons, and boarded a few horses. Typically we had about 20 horses at the farm during the summer, and about 10 horses during the remainder of the year. When I was about 9, my father made the difficult decision that we needed to sell two of our older, chronically lame horses to the local horse trader (though we had no illusions about where those horses were actually going). It was a hard decision for my dad, and an even harder one for him to explain to his daughters, but he was trying to run a business; he needed to show evidence to the IRS (if need be) that he was making economically defensible decisions. Selling two horses for ~ $250 each made far more economic sense than spending ~ $100 each (at that time) to have them euthanized and buried. However, even though my dad convinced me it was the sensible thing to do, I never quite got over the emotional discomfort of that day.

Fast forward 30 years to the summer of 2006. My niece and her family had purchased a small, stock-type mare for a reasonable price that seemed gentle and reasonably well broke. However, after she bucked off my brother-in-law and frightened my niece, I volunteered to take the mare to my house for awhile to work with her. She was aloof from the start, but easy enough to deal with. I began riding her daily and quickly established that she hadn't been trained with much finesse, but did appear rideable. So much so, that I had my 14 year old daughter ride her one night while I was away (and my husband was home). In the arena, with no apparent provocation, she bolted and caused my daughter to leap off just before hitting the arena fence. My daughter got back on and rode her for a bit, then put her away. The next day, I rode her (and knew about the previous day's events). I double checked saddle fit, bridle fit, palpated for back discomfort, mouth discomfort…anything I could think of. Now I have ridden several hundred horses over the years and exercised race horses for six summers, and never, ever have I had a horse bolt with me at the speed that horse did on that day. I had been walking her in a small circle since she seemed nervous (again for seemingly no reason) and she just flat-out bolted. I've stopped a number of runaways over the years, but this one proved unstoppable. I bailed just before she hit the fence and ended up with a concussion-induced black out, an MRI and a $2200 hospital bill (luckily covered by insurance).

After I got my sensibilities back, I informed my brother- and sister-in-law that I could not in good conscience let them take that horse back home with them because I had no doubt that she would badly hurt someone at some time. Euthanasia was not an option they wanted to consider, so I agreed to take the mare to an auction…realizing where she was likely to end up. I felt that I had a greater ethical responsibility to the safety of my niece than I did to protect the life of that horse. In my mind, that horse broke her social contract (which we'll discuss later). When I took her to the auction, which I admit is one of the hardest things I've ever done, I wrote several paragraphs about the mare and had the auctioneer read them aloud. I did not want anyone mistakenly buying the horse as a youth riding mount. (Oh, I should mention, several months later, my sister-in-law found out that this horse had a history of doing similar things to her past riders).
Despite the fact that this horse hurt me badly (I had a shoulder injury that took over 6 months to heal and had short term memory loss for about two weeks), I do not directly blame the horse. In all probability, someone, somewhere had done a lousy job of training this horse and somehow imparted terror into her in response to certain actions (that I never did put my finger on…and please remember that studying horse behavior is my specialty area). Nonetheless, she had become a danger; in all probability, she was going to continue to hurt unsuspecting riders, and there just aren't enough homes out there for "pasture companions". When there are so many well-behaved, predictable horses available, why should someone use valuable resources on problem horses? As an aside, after this episode, I was able to find a 22 year old, retired Arabian show gelding for my niece. In a sense this was somewhat of an unwanted horse, but he now had a definite purpose and he well deserved it. He is with them still and teaching them how wonderful it can be to work with a horse.

DO WE ACCEPT THAT HORSES ARE A BUSINESS?

Folks, the horse industry is a business (but that doesn't mean all horse owners are trying to be involved at a business level). This industry directly generates $39 billion to the US economy and has a $102 billion multiplier impact (1). It provides 460,000 full-time equivalent jobs (1). This industry pays over $1.9 billion in government taxes (1). In our current economic climate, can we truly "turn" on a business that is providing this kind of impact to the US economy? Yet those who are unequivocally anti-slaughter, who promote the idea that there is no such thing as an unwanted horse, would like us to set aside all economic factors in our decision making related to this issue.

It will be some time yet before all the appropriate data is generated to verify how many unwanted horses exist, but I travel to many different horse farms and many different horse competitions each year. Please trust me, we have a glut of unwanted horses…and the problem has snowballed since the closing of the US facilities that were once slaughtering horses. We are seeing unprecedented numbers of abuse and neglect cases (just do an Internet search for recent newspaper articles related to the topic). For years, there was a place for the "cheap, unwanted horse" to go, or for the horse whose owners had stumbled onto difficult times…that place was the low end auction. My students have told me of recent auctions where horses have sold for $10 - $20 apiece; or in other cases, where no bid comes up for a horse at all and the owners leave before the end of the sale. This leaves the auction owner trying to figure out what to do with the abandoned horse.

I believe that each owner has always needed to make a decision about whether the cheap auction was the right place for a horse to go, but at least the option was available. For myself, with horses who followed the social contract, there was never a question of whether I would take

a horse to slaughter…even if it meant sacrificing some luxury items for awhile, I was going to find a way to pay for any necessary euthanasia and burial costs that might arise. But, this is me operating as an individual and only needing to deal with this decision about once every 10 years and living in a place where it is actually legal to bury a horse. Is it truly fair to expect a horse business, which has to make this decision multiple times per year, to spend the money on each animal for euthanasia and burial? Is this an ethical decision to just "waste" those potential resources"? Is this an ethical decision to impart our values onto all others? In a country where > 90% of the population consumes beef (2), is it really such a far stretch to imagine humans in another country wanting to consume a very similar hoofed, herbivorous animal – the horse? Is it environmentally conscientious for us to approximately double the number of horses being buried each year? These are hard questions, but questions that must be asked.

Let's take a country with less economic wherewithal than the US…e.g. Mongolia. Mongolia has a longstanding reputation of having outstanding horsemen; however, they cannot afford the luxury of having horses be strictly pets. Horses are used for all forms of work and riding and at the end of their life, or if badly injured or dangerous, the horse is used as a human food source. It would be ludicrous for these people to even consider the idea of just burying such a valuable resource. But if the animal is dealt with humanely while alive, if it is killed quickly and efficiently, and then its meat is utilized for human nourishment, is this unethical? In my evaluation, it is not.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

Back to this issue of a social contract. For the serious ethicists who read this document, I apologize for my loose translation of this term. It is a concept that my major professor and I spent hours discussing and deciding that it could apply to the reason that (in my mind) it seemed acceptable to slaughter some horses and not others. The conversation began after a debate that another colleague and myself had over whether one of our university brood mares should be sent to slaughter or not. She was over 25, had not produced a foal for several years, had never been trained to ride, and had health issues that were become increasingly difficult to manage. Hence, for a university program, she was essentially just a financial liability. However, this mare had produced several very valuable foals for our farm. She was a pleasant mare who was not difficult to handle. I argued to my colleague that she had held up her part of "the bargain" and we owed her euthanasia or finding her a home where she could be someone's pasture pet. My colleague argued that the method of death probably didn't ultimately matter to the horse and that we could ill afford to spend > $150 versus making ~ $400. At the time, I didn't have a follow up argument …other than tears. The tears prevailed, and the mare was ultimately sent for euthanasia, but it took several years before I was able to add anything to my ethical argument. I ultimately decided that we (the university) had a social contract with that mare…she held up her part of the bargain by producing high quality foals and being pleasant to deal with. Ultimately, we held up our part of the bargain by not subjecting her to the stresses of an auction house, being mixed with other horses for travel to a slaughter facility, etc. The method of death itself between a well managed slaughter facility versus a well-trained veterinarian probably does not ultimately matter to the horse…but I had come to realize there was an extra piece of the ethical puzzle, and that was how *we*, the human part of the equation, end up feeling about our tough decisions. Decisions that leave a person feeling "haunted" are often unethical. It may just take awhile to determine the ethical rationale for the discomfort.

SOME OTHER ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

A person does not need to take high level ethical philosophy classes to be capable of making ethical decisions. Most people, though clearly not all, have an intuitive sense of good ethics (or good morals). Simply put, ethics refers to the "rightness" or "wrongness" of decisions. I often tell people it is like imagining you have a good angel and bad angel on each shoulder…one is telling you what you know is probably the right thing to do, and the other is telling you something that might be more fun, or easier, but is ultimately the wrong thing to do. Simply following legal rules is not necessarily sufficient for making ethical decisions. Some people allow religious guidelines to assist them in ethical decision making. While this can often be an important factor, it is not always sufficient. To make and defend an ethical decision, we must study arguments, premises, conclusions and validity. Our perceptions, beliefs, and values will all heavily impact our ethical decision making process.

A fundamental principle to this issue of dealing with unwanted horses or dealing with whether equine slaughter is, or is not ethical, is determining which of the following categories most nearly fits your belief system. Are you most nearly a dominionist (3) (humans can do whatever we please to animals, especially if it benefits us in some way), are you most nearly a welfarist (3) (believes that animals are sentient and humans have a responsibility to act as stewards), or are you most nearly a rightist (3) (believes that animals have basic moral rights and therefore cannot be used for human ends)?

MY OWN OPINION HAS EVOLVED

When the initial debate about legislation regarding the slaughter plants was being raised, I did not weigh in very heavily. I love horses beyond any sensible, logical measure, and thus the knowledge of how horses are sometimes handled at auction houses, and the realities of long distance transportation for slaughter-bound horses made me reluctant to weigh in on the debate. I have told people repeatedly, it is not the actual act of slaughter that concerns me, rather it is the roughly 72 hours pre-slaughter that concerns me. Furthermore, I told various people that perhaps the most compassionate thing that could happen for horses was for there to actually be *more* horse-approved slaughter facilities so that horses had less distance to travel, less handling to tolerate, etc.

However, over the past 12 months, I have come to the unkind realization that there is a worse reality playing out for the horse. Regardless of how accountable we ever make horse breeders and the horse industry at large, there will always be some unwanted horses. The financial responsibility that goes with caring for an unwanted horse is very steep for the average US family or typical horse business. I believe wholeheartedly that the elimination of US options for horse slaughter have led to worse welfare realities for today's unwanted horses. As families experience economic difficulties at a rate not seen in many decades, corners are being cut on feeding horses that can no longer be "dumped". Many of the rescue centers are full; and very few "unwanted" horses fit the bill for donations to universities, therapeutic riding centers, second careers, or mounted police units. In some ways, the closing of the US slaughter plants could not possibly have come at a worse time for horse welfare. In recent times, feed prices have doubled, as have bedding costs, and fuel costs. If that horse that has no where else to go ends up receiving sub-optimal care, possibly even suffering prolonged malnutrition or starvation, how can this possibly be seen as a positive outcome for horses? The amount of suffering experienced by a horse undergoing starvation is far worse than what a horse will experience going through an auction house and going to a regulated slaughter facility.

CONCLUSION

The horse is a symbol of beauty, grace, and power. It is a cultural icon throughout many countries of the world, but especially in the US. In Kellert's (4) study of American attitudes toward animals, he found the horse to be one of the top 3 most beloved animals. This perception of the horse has greatly complicated end-of-life decisions for horses. Further adding to the divisiveness is the fact that horse industry personnel tend to classify horses as "livestock" whereas the public tends to classify the horse as a "companion animal". Many people wrote their congressmen and congresswomen about this issue who had never even touched a live horse. But because they categorize horses as beautiful creatures, they could not imagine that having horse slaughter as an option could possibly be an appropriate fate.

It is sometimes stated that 'why can't the horse industry be more like the dog and cat industry' (i.e. not allowing slaughter whatsoever). Estimates show that between 2.5 and 4 million dogs and cats are euthanized at animal shelters each year (5). These could be considered the unwanted dogs and cats. By contrast, ~100,000 horses (on average) were going to slaughter when that option was allowed; this is only about 3% of the number of unwanted dogs and cats. The horse industry, in many regards, is already doing a reasonable job of minimizing the number of unwanted animals produced. Very, very few foals are produced just to have a cute play thing for the children…it is simply too expensive to raise a foal for this purpose. Most owners explore every option for a horse before, possibly, making the choice to send it to a cheap auction. The title of this forum is 'The Unwanted Horse Issue – What Now?'. Though I know it is unpopular with many, I believe the 'what now' is to re-evaluate whether keeping the US slaughter plants closed is in the best interest of horses. This does not negate our responsibility to work toward reducing the number of unwanted horses; it does not negate our responsibility to explore alternatives for unwanted horses; it *does* require that we re-examine a complicated issue.

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Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

Carcass Disposal Options

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INTRODUCTION

Surprisingly, the disposal of animal mortalities and animal byproducts resulting from the production and processing of meat is not uniformly regulated in the United States. Such materials are unstable and frequently contaminated with viral and bacterial pathogens that may spread to other animals and humans. Disposing of such materials without first processing with heat or chemicals to deactivate conventional pathogens is a danger to human health, animal health and the environment. In addition, as cattle mortalities and specified risk materials (SRM) are unintentionally steered away from the rendering industry by well-intended rulemaking, the incidence of improper disposal will increase, as will the potential for public and animal exposure to pathogens. Regulations to provide uniform standards for traceability, biosecurity, and environmental protection are needed. Such regulations would allow only federally licensed or permitted operators to collect, process, and dispose of or recycle all animal byproducts and mortalities.

BACKGROUND

The rendering industry collects and safely processes approximately 54 billion pounds of animal byproducts and mortalities each year in the U.S. However, economic conditions brought on by feed restrictions (21 CFR 589.2000; the “Feed Rule”) to prevent the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and escalating energy costs, have made it necessary for renderers to charge for their services. As a result, the amount of animal byproduct and mortalities that are disposed without proper safeguards has increased. For example, the percentage of cattle mortalities processed by rendering decreased from 56% in 1995 to about 45% in 2005 (1).

ROLE OF RENDERING

The rendering industry provides services for the safe collection of animal byproducts and mortalities, transports the materials in biosecure, leak-proof trucks and uses heat (240 to 290º F; 115 to 145º C) to dehydrate and separate the fat and solid materials. The rendering process converts raw animal materials into fat and meat and bone meal, which unless re-contaminated, are free from pathogenic bacteria, viruses and other conventional organisms and stable for prolonged storage.

Timely processing, processing temperatures, and the concentration of animal mortalities and other animal tissues at a finite number of locations provides the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) with many of the necessary tools needed to prevent disease outbreaks, eradicate diseases, and monitor the health status of animal herds and flocks in the

United States. It will be difficult for APHIS to realize their mission if the rendering industry is not utilized to its fullest potential.

MOST DISPOSAL ALTERNATIVES DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS

As a general rule, the cost of disposing of animal byproducts and/or animal mortalities rises in inverse proportion to the environmental impact of the disposal options chosen (2). The cheapest disposal methods, including burial, abandonment, and low-investment composting, are seldom biosecure because the disposal conditions do little to kill or contain pathogens (3).

Composting

Interest in using on-farm composting for the disposal of animal byproducts and mortalities is growing because the practice is perceived to be simple and economical. However, properly designed and managed compost sites are complex, management intense and require significant capital investments (4). Contrary to popular belief, simply covering mortalities in manure is not true composting. As a result, most attempts at on-farm composting fail because such sites tend to be poorly managed and are not constructed to prevent or contain runoff and protect the environment. Instead of being composted, the materials become piles of rotting tissues and carcasses that offer no more biosecurity than carcasses that have been abandoned.

Burial

Although it is one of the most widely used disposal methods, burial creates the greatest risk to human health and the environment because of the potential for ground and surface water contamination if strict guidelines are not followed.

Landfills

Space is the most apparent limitation to disposing of animal materials in landfills. While rendering and incineration dehydrate the materials to reduce volume, amendments such as sawdust must be added to animal materials before landfilling to accommodate their high water content which increases volume.

Incineration

Because of the high temperatures used, incineration is a biologically safe method if done properly in an approved mortality incinerator. However, current incineration capacity is inadequate for large numbers of animals. Construction of new incinerators requires significant capital investments and is difficult to permit because of air quality issues. Single animal incineration, or cremation, is available for horses at $800 to $1600 depending on transport distances.

Alkaline digestion

Alkaline digestion is an effective and relatively new technology that uses heat and alkaline conditions to inactivate conventional pathogens. Prolonged exposure to these conditions for 6 or more hours may also inactivate the BSE agent. However, alkaline digesters have limited capacity, produce large quantities of effluent that must be disposed and are limited in number.

Rendering Compared to Other Disposal Methods:

The rendering process provides a reasonably priced means to break the disease cycle. Typical pathogens are destroyed rapidly by processing at lethal temperatures.

Following their experiences with BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), the United Kingdom Department of Health evaluated various methods of animal mortality disposal for potential risks to public health. Compared with landfills and burial, disposal methods that involved heat processing, such as rendering and incineration, were more effective at controlling biological hazards, including food pathogens (such as E. Coli, Listeria, Salmonella and Campylobacter), organisms that cause diseases (such as anthrax, botulism, leptospirosis, bovine tuberculosis, plague and tetanus) and surface and ground water pathogens (cryptosporidium and giardia). Only rendering also minimized the potential health risks to chemical hazards such as dioxins, hydrogen sulfide as well as emissions of SO_X and NO_X.

LOCATION OF RENDERING PLANTS

Many states have rendering plants, but some areas are not served by independent renderers equipped to handle dead stock. The NRA member directory including current locations and contact information can be found at **http://nationalrenderers.org/about/directory**.

ENOUGH RENDERING CAPACITY?

A 2005 study commissioned by the American Horse Council Foundation estimates there are 9.2 million horses in the United States. Assuming a 10-year life span, an estimated 920,000 horses die per year. The carcasses of these horses are buried, rendered, or otherwise disposed. USDA statistics show that 66,183 horses were slaughtered for human consumption in the U.S. in 2004. Canada slaughters about 22,000 horses per year. Thus, passage of the Horse Slaughter Prevention Act or similar legislation should increase the rendering of horses less than 10%. A federal regulation on dead animal disposal would likely increase the proportion of all dead animals, including horses, going to rendering plants. In any case, existing renderers should be able to handle the increased volume with little problem.

EUTHANASIA

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Expert Panel on Euthanasia in 2001 (5) published three acceptable methods of euthanasia for horses: overdose of a barbiturate anesthesia, gunshot, and penetrating captive bolt.

The most common method of euthanasia of horses by veterinarians is by lethal intravenous injection of sodium phenobarbital (trade names, Euthasol or Beuthanasia-D). For aesthetic reasons, most pet food companies avoid using products from companion animals and require products to be free of sodium phenobarbital. If horses were to be rendered with more frequency, alternatives to barbiturates for euthanasia may be desired though the trace residues in by-products would be a minimal risk in pet food or other protein meals.

SURVEY OF RENDERERS ACCEPTING HORSES

In preparation for this conference, the National Renderers Association conducted a survey of renderers known to accept horses. The questions were these:

1. Do you take still horse carcasses at your rendering plants?
   * Companies owning approximately 25 plants answered yes.

2. How much do you charge to take horse carcasses?
   * Current charges range from $40 to $250, depending on distance, market, and volume. Some allow dead horses to be dropped off at the plant for a lesser charge. Some companies don't share this data.
3. Do you require the horse to be dead before your employee handles the carcass?
   * Some renderers require the animals to be dead before calling the service.

4. Do you provide euthanasia service (will your driver kill the horse)?
   * Some renderers will euthanize horses as a service.

5. Do you have any restrictions on the use of sodium phenobarbital by veterinarians for euthanizing horses you pick up?
   * Some renderers will not accept animals treated with sodium phenobarbital. Renderers prefer that sodium phenobarbital not be used to euthanize horses because they market protein meals to pet food companies. Sodium Phenobarbital at very low, diluted levels is not a risk to livestock.

6. Have you seen an increase in horse carcasses you pick up in recent months (as a result of the banning of horse slaughter in Illinois and Texas)?
   * Most have seen only small increases. Plants near Nevada have seen significant increases.

NATIONAL RENDERERS ASSOCIATION POSITION ON ANIMAL MORTALITY DISPOSAL

We believe that appropriate safeguards must be used for the disposal of animal byproducts and mortalities in order to protect animal and human health. Regulations requiring animal byproducts and mortalities to be heat or chemically processed (such as with rendering, incineration or alkaline digestion) will certainly reduce animal and human exposure to conventional pathogens.

Because of increasing costs and additional restrictions on cattle materials that can be used for feed, the rendering industry will restructure somewhat to provide dedicated disposal sites for the collection, processing and disposal of prohibited materials (1). However, without the development and enforcement of disposal standards to ensure traceability, biosecurity and environmental protection, animal-based materials that are banned from feed will be diverted from such facilities and be disposed of by the cheapest (and least appropriate) method available. Regulation of dead animal disposal would enhance human, animal, and environmental health.

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Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction

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INTRODUCTION

As Americans, we like our food fast, our problems solved in a 60 minute drama, and our conflicts resolved *via* the line of least resistance. For the horse, with which we have a complicated and contradictory relationship, this has meant a quiet acceptance or even advocacy by a large segment of the horse industry, on the preference for slaughter to dispose of its "unwanted" horses. Instead of creating mechanisms for horse owners to adequately care for their horses at all stages of life, addressing behavior and training issues and creating suitable homing alternatives for horses who must be sold; the industry is infatuated with the perceived ease and economics of an inhumane solution. Some have even dared to argue that it is best for the horse himself.

The logic that there are too many horses, that they are expensive and that without the "safety valve of slaughter" they would suffer a worse fate of neglect, abandonment or cruelty is not supported by the facts. The reason we are debating their care or fate at all is that there is money to be made by slaughtering horses. The slaughter industry has preyed on the failure of the equine community to adequately take care of its horses and educate its constituents by marketing its services as a viable solution to the mistakes good people make in buying a horse they can neither train nor care for, or the apathetic choices of the equine businessman. These same constituents are desensitized by many horse industry leaders to the trauma and brutality of slaughter and incited to believe that slaughter — not education, or restraint in breeding or responsibility for the care of a horse for life — is the only rational approach to a horse without a home. However, with imagination and commitment, the horse industry can not only end horse slaughter and reinvigorate the horse community, it can provide a more positive experience for both the horse and the horse enthusiast.

The fiction is that the slaughter of horses is a solution at all. Horse slaughter is, in part, a **cause of**, not a solution to, the mismatch of horses to responsible homes. The availability of slaughter has led to a prevailing culture and attitude within the horse community that horses are disposable, and therefore lacking in value and not worth any significant investment. They are therefore often condemned to a lack of care, responsibility or training that often ensures their deadly fate. As long as there is a ready killer buyer market for any horse who falls out of favor, the standards of care will be artificially low. The economic analysis a race horse owner, farmer, trainer or rancher might make that would ensure a horse is only bred if there is a strong market, trained to the best of his ability, and provided for as he or she ages is tainted to the detriment of the horse, and the horse market, because the current consequences for making a mistake, or apathy, or a change of mind, is at worst, a check from a killer buyer for $125.

The question for us should not be “Unwanted Horse: Fact or Fiction” but “Unwanted Horse: Why?”. If that were presented in a rational and unbiased discussion, the argument that slaughter is necessary, or humane would evaporate and we would instead focus on how we should all work together to stop slaughter and promote a home for every horse because slaughter not only damages the horse, it degrades and weakens the horse industry itself.

A “FAST FOOD” SOLUTION

Animal protection groups grapple chronically with the issue of perceived and real over populations of a variety of animals. But unlike other animals such as dogs or cats that can produce multiple litters in a year, horses typically only have one foal every eleven months. Almost every foal that is born in this country is born because a person actively decided to breed his or her mare or stallion. In some cases, it’s the thoroughbred farm that produces hundreds of foals in a year. In other instances, it’s the backyard couple who wants to breed their mare because they are hoping to duplicate her wonderful disposition or unique color. In both cases, the end result is the same: another horse, one that will require care, attention and training for decades to come, becomes part of the horse industry in this country.

Even the most carefully planned breeding program cannot guarantee a horse that will win races or excel in the show ring. However, the horse industry has the power, the ability and the responsibility to guarantee that each horse, no matter its breed, age or skill level, has a successful run at life. If a breeder can’t at least aspire to this commitment, he or she should refrain from breeding a mare. This would make each horse, except the most infirm or incorrigible, extremely “wanted”. Unlike virtually any other species on the planet, the fate of the domesticated horse is completely in the control of man.

Not only do we not discourage breeding while we discuss the unwanted horse, our government and equine associations actively provide incentives to add to the problem. Currently, there are a number of federal and state programs that provide incentives and funding for horse breeders, sending a message that breeding can and should be rewarded. These programs, coupled with breed registries that rely on new registrations for the bulk of their funding, send the wrong message to the horse industry—that it’s okay to produce more and more horses, year after year, without having a long-term plan for them. Instead, new programs and funding streams need to be created to aid trainers who are interested in retraining unsuccessful race horses for careers in the show ring or on the trails; educate new and existing horse owners about how to provide appropriate care and training for their horses and to assist non-profit equine welfare organizations that work to find suitable homes for all kinds of horses. A greater emphasis must be placed on quality over quantity and indiscriminate breeding should be discouraged.

THE GENESIS OF THE “UNWANTED HORSE”

We have all heard a version of the fable of the woman standing at the edge of a river and, noticing a body float by, pulling it out. She then sees another, pulls it out and then many more, until finally, exhausted, she decides to let the bodies float by and run upstream to find out why they are in the river in the first place. This is the solution to “unwanted horses”. It is certainly a solution to slaughter. We need to begin to look “upstream.”

The good news for a path to a home for every horse is that the vast majority are not some cog in a large commercial enterprise. Fifty five percent of the horses in America today live "at a residence with *equidae* for personal use" (1) on a farm with five or fewer equids. (2) According to the American Horse Council, 44 percent of the horses in this country are used for recreation. (3) In many discussions with owners, trainers, livestock boards, and industry leaders, one cause of instability for horses is repeated again and again. It is the prevailing attitude that the solution to a horse's problem, any problem, is to trade, not train. This attitude is not good for the horse, the owner, or the industry. The only winners are the people who profit from the sale.

The Humane Society of the United States is hoping to call attention to this problem and to elicit support from equine institutions in offering guidance and support to horse owners for making and keeping the best equine matches possible. We have launched our "Horses: Companions for Life" educational program aimed at helping potential, new and seasoned horse owners understand how to make humane decisions for their equine companions at all stages of the horse's life, The keystone of the program is our recently released book, "The HSUS Complete Guide to Horse Care" (4). With this program we hope to educate and inspire horse owners to make responsible and realistic decisions before and while a horse is in their lives so that horse ownership is a positive and life-long experience for both the horse and her guardian. We, along with other leading animal protection groups, founded the Homes for Horses Coalition in 2007 to help the horse rescue community increase its professionalism, operate more effectively and have access to greater resources. We also partnered with the Pets911 Pet Adoption Network™ to create a horse adoption network where any 501(c)3 horse rescue organization can post their adoptable horses, free of charge. This site has the same criteria and appeal as the major horse sale sites and is accessible through The HSUS and Pets911 web sites.

We are focusing on this program because, like the victims in the river, the road to the slaughter house begins "upstream". Its genesis takes place years before a filly is loaded onto a truck. The destiny of slaughter may begin with an 8-year-old girl begging an indulgent parent to buy a perfect pony off the Internet. That animal, sold because she was rated with a temperament of "4," and was too much for the folks who bought her at an auction, could easily have six owners before she is 10-years-old. She could go through child after child, traded again and again, with no one taking the time to notice an ill fitting saddle, a small limp in her walk, her ignorance of basic horse manners. Another horse may be sold again and again because she cribs, or bucks, or fails to easily load onto a trailer. And along the way, with the auction house open every week, that pony or mare could easily be put up for bid and sold, and in an unlucky stroke of luck, be purchased by a killer buyer and shipped off to Mexico or Canada for slaughter, instead of a loving family who would care for her for life.

Is that horse "unwanted"? Or is she simply unlucky? Whatever she is, a caring, compassionate society could have-should have-saved her life.

Some factors related to the realities with our relationship with horses make a commitment for life difficult. Like people, horses have different personalities and interests. Some love to run, some to take a stroll in the woods, and still others, just graze in the field. If a person is determined to compete in dressage and falls in love with a horse who wants to jump, there is a problem.

There is also the reality that there is an inverse relationship between the age/ability of the horse and his rider. The last thing a novice rider needs is a green, 6-year-old horse. But the rider who starts with a 20-year-old Quarter Horse, then graduates to a 15-year-old Hanoverian and then

wants to train a Thoroughbred either has a big barn and understanding parents, or she has had to make a decision to let a horse go.

These issues beg for education and direction from the leaders in this industry. The options of leasing a horse, talking to trainers, making sure there is a fit before any horse is purchased, would greatly reduce the number of transactions…and numbers of homes… a horse has in his life.
For horses bred to compete and win, the road to slaughter begins with an owner with big dreams and no sense of obligation to the animal with whose life he gambles. And in an industry that only needs horses aged two to five, little to no thought is given to the fate of the horse, even if he is successful, for the other twenty to twenty-five years of life. Some in the racing industry have begun to support and even champion the rescue operations that provide sanctuary for the industry cast-offs. This is a great start. But more facilities and opportunities for retraining and equine elder care are needed. There are few pleasure barns in this country that don't have a story about the adoption of an "off-the-track Thoroughbred," picked up at an auction as a "project horse" by a kind or ambitious equestrian. But unfortunately, the "army of the kind" is much smaller in its ranks than the dreamers of a Derby win. And many of the kind find after a few months that the spirit and focus that made the horse a good bet at the track make him difficult and unpredictable in the show ring. And so he is sold, again and again.

With the leadership of The American Horse Council, the American Association of Equine Practitioners, animal protection groups including The HSUS, state and federal agencies and others, we can provide the guidance to horse enthusiasts to really understand the expense and commitment that horse ownership brings. We can provide guidance on alternatives to buying a horse at the first desire to bring one into your life, realistic expectations for dealing with behavior and personality issues, and compassionate and realistic suggestions for what to do when you must part ways, including, if necessary, considerations of euthanasia.

THE FALLACY OF HORSE SLAUGHTER AS PREVENTION AGAINST HORSE ABUSE AND NEGLECT

In the past few months, there has been an increase in media reports connecting the closure of the U.S. horse slaughter plants with an increase in horse neglect, abuse and abandonment. However, the reality is that nearly the same number of horses that were being slaughtered in the U.S. is being exported for slaughter in Mexico and Canada and there is no factual basis to support reports of an increase in abandoned and/or neglected horses.

Research has shown that there is no universal system for tracking abandoned stray or neglected horses and in states that do track such cases, there has been no discernable increase or any evidence to correlate with the media reports. For example, an AP report claiming that horses were being abandoned to fend for themselves on abandoned strip mines in Kentucky has frequently been cited as evidence of an increase in abandoned horses in subsequent news reports. However, a police investigation into this story showed that the horses were all privately owned and had simply been turned out to graze on this land as had commonly been done in previous years. A research team led by John Holland has looked into each of these claims, contacted state officials in an attempt to verify these claims of abandoned horses and in every instance have found the claims to be unfounded or exaggerated (5).

The reality is that the total number of horses going to slaughter each year represents only 1% of the total horse population in the United States. This percentage of horses could easily be reabsorbed by existing resources. In the past twenty years, the total horse population in the United States has been steadily growing while at the same time the number of horses going to slaughter has been decreasing. At one time, there were at least twelve horse slaughter plants in the United States. In 2007, before closing due to legislative and court action on the state level, there were only three. If there truly is a relationship between the availability of horse slaughter and horse abuse and neglect, it would stand to reason that when horse slaughter is removed as an option, horse abuse and neglect would increase. The facts show that just the opposite is true. When the Cavel International horse slaughter plant in Illinois burned down and was closed for nearly two years, that state saw a marked decrease in horse abuse and neglect cases. Similarly, in California when the state passed a law prohibiting the selling and transporting of horses for slaughter, there was a 34% decrease in horse theft in the year following passage of the legislation.

The fact is there will always be a certain percentage of the animal owning (dogs, cats, horses, goats, pigs, etc.) population who will not properly care for their animals and as a result, must have their animals seized. These cases can and should be dealt with through legal means and are why every state has laws related to animal cruelty.

CONCLUSION

The proposition that there are large numbers of unwanted horses in this country in need of slaughter can be answered with a resounding “No”. There are many horses in need of the commitment of the people with a stake in the horse industry to take responsibility for reducing the numbers that are bred, educating novice horse owners about proper care and training, creating new equestrian opportunities that allow more people to become a part of the equine community and calling for an end to the unnecessary brutality of slaughter. Anyone who has cared for a horse understands the special connection we have with them. They inspire and delight us. They teach us patience and compassion. They symbolize freedom and strength. We owe them our commitment to adding the same joy to their lives as they do ours. And whether we own them because we care or because we use them in an economic gamble, the least we owe each of them, if we bring them into the world, or purchase them for our entertainment or enjoyment, is to “want” them.

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Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

The "Unwanted" Horse in the U.S.: An Overview of the Issue

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The issue of the large number of unwanted horses in the U.S. first came to light following the 2001 Foot and Mouth disease epidemic in Europe. The European consumer's concern with eating beef resulted in an increase in their consumption of horse meat. This change drew media attention to the fact horses were being processed for meat in the United States and exported to Europe for human consumption. Media coverage of the issue not only drew the attention of the horse owning public, but also equine breed associations, animal rights/welfare organizations, veterinary associations and the non-horse owning public. Because of focused lobbying efforts, federal legislation was introduced in Congress to prohibit slaughtering of horses for human consumption. Reports by the media and the proposed legislation fostered for the first time the realization that there is truly an unwanted horse issue in the United States that must be addressed.

Horses processed for meat represent the lowest economic level of the horse population and typify the unwanted horse in the United States. The phrase "Unwanted Horse" was first coined by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) in 2005 and is defined as: horses that are no longer wanted by their current owner because they are old, injured, sick, unmanageable, or fail to meet their owner's expectations. Generally, these are horses with incurable lameness, behavior problems, are dangerous or old. They also include un-adoptable feral horses, and horses that fail to meet their owner's expectations because they are unmarketable, unattractive, not athletic, have no color, are the wrong color, or cost too much to care for. Normal healthy horses of varying ages and breeds may also become "unwanted". In many cases, these animals have had multiple owners, have been shipped from one sale barn, stable or farm to another, and have ultimately been rejected. The number of unwanted horses in the United States varies from year to year. In 2007, ± 58,000 horses were processed for meat in the United States, ±35,000 were exported to Canada for processing, ± 45,000 were exported to Mexico for processing, ± 21,000 un-adoptable feral horses were kept in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) funded long-term sanctuaries, ± 9,000 feral horses were in the BLM adoption pipeline and an undisclosed number were abandoned, neglected or abused. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) export records on U.S. horses shipped to Canadian processing plants in 2002-2005 indicate 42.8 percent were geldings, 52.1 percent were mares, 3.41 percent were stallions, and the gender was not recorded on 1.70 percent. In addition, 70 percent were western type horses, 11 percent were English or Thoroughbred type horses, 3.6 percent were draft type horses, and the rest included various breeds or types of horses or mules. In general, the types of horses and their genders reflect the demographics of the U. S. horse population with no specific type of horse standing out as the quintessential unwanted horse.

In 2007, approximately 150,000 horses were processed in the United States or exported for processing. That number is down dramatically from the 339,000 horses processed in 1989. The question to be answered is why was there a 56 percent reduction? Was it simply a surplus reduction or did the IRS tax code changes that occurred in the mid-1980s result in people selling

off horses they were no longer able to depreciate? Was there a change in market demand or were these horses absorbed by rescue and/or retirement facilities? It appears the reduction in unwanted horses being processed followed the decrease in the number of horses bred and registered in the mid-1980s and represented a surplus reduction as many investors left the horse industry.

According to the 2005 USDA National Animal Health Monitoring System survey, ± 167,000 (1.8 percent) horses in the United States 30 days of age or older were euthanized or died that year. An addition, ± 112,000 (1.3 percent) horses were processed for meat. And so the total mortality for horses in the United States in 2005 was approximately 3 to 4 percent of the horse population. These percentages have varied little during the last decade. The question facing the horse industry is if the option of annually removing unwanted horses from the general horse population via euthanasia at a processing plant is legislated out of existence, will the horse industry be able to provide adequate care and accommodations for these animals or will the industry need to absorb the cost of their euthanasia and carcass disposal?

In recent years horse rescue/adoption/retirement organizations have, to their credit, made a conscientious and concerted effort to provide care, funding or suitable accommodations for unwanted horses in both the private and public sector. The capacity of these facilities is unknown but estimates by the AAEP indicate current rescue and retirement organizations could rescue, retire or find alternative homes for no more than 6-10,000 horses per year. The average rescue facility can handle 30 horses on average. Due to the long natural life span of horses, approximately 30 years, rescue/adoption/retirement facilities face a potentially long, costly care period for each horse, and have placed funding as the critical limiting issue for those striving to provide an adequate standard of care. According to the results of a study conducted by North, et al., and presented at the Annual World Food and Agribusiness Forum in 2005, the cost to maintain a horse until its natural death averages $2,340 per year. The AAEP estimates the cost of maintaining a horse per year is $1,825, not including veterinary or farrier costs. For rescue/adoption/retirement facilities, the financial costs can quickly exceed their capacity to meet the needs of an ever-increasing number of neglected, abandoned or unwanted horses. The annual costs, however, understate the total cost required because horses that would have been processed in previous years now remain in the horse population. In addition, this subset of the horse population will increase each year as more unwanted horses are added to the population.

There are a number of current options for horses that are unwanted or no longer considered useful. Some can be retrained for another use. This is common in racehorses that often find second careers in dressage or hunter jumper competition. Some are donated to university animal science departments, law enforcement agencies, veterinary teaching hospitals or therapeutic riding programs. In addition, unwanted horses can be placed in long-term rescue/retirement facilities or adopted out. As has been discussed earlier, many are simply euthanized or sent to processing plants. Whenever there are large numbers of unwanted horses, there is always concern for the welfare of these horses. The reality for many unwanted horses is that they become a burden and are abused or neglected.

For those responsible horse owners who do not want to burden others with the disposition of a horse that is old, lame or no longer useful, the option of euthanasia and carcass disposal is available. The term euthanasia is derived from the Greek terms *eu* meaning good and t*hanatos* meaning death. A good death occurs with minimal pain and at the appropriate time in the horse's life to prevent unnecessary pain and suffering. Traditionally, justification for euthanasia has been based primarily on medical considerations, as well as future quality of life issues for the horse.

However, euthanasia at the request of the owner because they no longer want or can care for a horse may become more common. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association's 2000 Expert Panel on Euthanasia Report, there are three acceptable forms of euthanasia for horses: an overdose of barbiturate anesthesia, gunshot and penetrating captive bolt. Sodium pentobarbital is the most commonly used barbiturate for euthanasia in the horse and, when administered intravenously, depresses the central nervous system, causing loss of consciousness and deep anesthesia progressing to respiratory and cardiac arrest. The primary advantages of barbiturate overdose are speed of action and minimal discomfort to the animal. The major disadvantages are that administration of the drug requires rapid, intravenous administration, which means the animal must be restrained. In addition, prolonged muscular activity, gasping and vocalization can occur following drug administration and prior to death, which can be alarming to the owner. Because the carcass will contain high levels of barbiturate and must be considered an environmental hazard to wildlife and domestic carnivores, disposal options are limited. Physical methods of euthanasia include gunshot and penetrating captive bolt. When properly applied, both cause trauma to the brain resulting in immediate unconsciousness and a painless, humane death. The advantages of both gunshot and penetrating captive bolt are that they cause immediate brain death and the carcass is not an environmental hazard. Disadvantages include the fact they require skill and experience, and may be aesthetically unpleasant for observers.

All states as well as many counties and municipalities regulate the disposition of animal carcasses. However, approved methods vary widely with animal species and regulatory authority. Therefore, it is important the attending veterinarian and/or owner know the specific regulations in their area regarding disposal of horse carcasses. There are a number of carcass disposal options available including burial, composting, incineration, rendering and bio-digestion. Burial regulations vary, but generally require three to four feet of dirt cover the carcass. Many states mandate the burial site be at least 100 yards from wells and streams. Backhoe service costs to bury the horse on the owner's property vary with the area of the country but usually range from $250 to $500. Landfill is an alternative to burial in some states, but not all municipal landfills will accept horse carcasses, especially those that have been euthanized with barbiturate overdose. Costs vary but average around $80 to $500. Rendering is another option and involves cooking the carcass to destroy pathogens and produce useable end products such as meat, bone and blood meal that can be used in animal feeds. This is an environmentally safe method for disposal of dead livestock and is available in approximately 50 percent of the states. Rendering companies will generally pick up euthanized animals and, depending upon the state, charge from $75 to $250. Incineration or cremation is one of the most biosecure methods of carcass disposal, but is costly. Depending upon the area of the country and the cost of propane fuel, incineration of an average sized horse costs between $600 and $2,000. A method of carcass disposal that has recently gained popularity is composting, which is defined as controlled, sanitary decomposition of organic materials by bacteria. If done properly, it takes as little as six weeks to as long as 9 months to compost an intact horse carcass. When properly performed, composting is safe and produces an end product that is a relatively odorless, spongy and humus-like substance that can be used for soil supplementation. A relatively new method of carcass disposal is bio-digestion. Bio-digesters use alkaline hydrolysis to solubilize and hydrolyze the animal's carcass rapidly and have become popular with veterinary colleges and industrial research facilities. They are a less expensive, more environmentally friendly alternative to incineration and can turn a horse carcass into a pathogen-free, aqueous solution of small peptides, amino acids, sugars, soaps and powdered bone.

A review of the unwanted horse issue would not be complete without a discussion of anti-slaughter legislation and efforts the industry has undertaken to address the unwanted horse issue. The 1996 Farm Bill gave the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulatory responsibility for humane transport of horses to processing plants. APHIS oversees the requirements on access to food, water and rest during shipment, as well as the types of horses that cannot be shipped. These include horses unable to bear weight on all four legs, unable to walk unassisted, blind in both eyes, foals less than six months old and pregnant mares that may foal during the trip. In addition, the regulations phased out the use of double decker trailers in 2006 and require origin/shipper certificates accompany each shipment. In 2001, Congresswoman Morella of New York introduced a bill prohibiting the interstate transport of horses to slaughter. The bill was never taken up by the full House, however, it did spark debate within the horse industry about the benefits or problems associated with euthanasia and processing of unwanted horses. The debate about the proposed legislation struck an emotional chord within the horse industry and the general public. Proponents argued the ban on slaughter would eliminate pain and suffering of those horses shipped to processing plants and the surplus of unwanted horses that would result could easily be absorbed by the horse industry. Opponents to the bill argued that banning the slaughter of low-level horses would result in increased neglect, abuse and abandonment of unwanted horses, as well as unintended consequences that would negatively impact the health and welfare of the nation's horses. They also pointed out the bill did not provide funding, an infrastructure or enforcement authority to address the welfare of unwanted horses no longer processed for meat. The bill limited equine euthanasia options and did not address carcass disposal environmental concerns. There was also concern that if the processing plants overseen by USDA veterinarians were closed, horses would be transferred longer distances without APHIS oversight and processed at foreign processing plants not under USDA's jurisdiction or U.S. humane standards for animal treatment and handling. In 2003 and 2004, Rep. Sweeney of New York introduced H.R. 857 to prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption and a similar bill was introduced on the Senate side, S. 2352 by Senator Ensign of Nevada. Neither bill moved out of committee. In 2005, H.R. 503 was introduced into the House and proposed to amend the *Horse Protection Act* by prohibiting the sale or transportation of horses to be slaughtered for human consumption or other purposes. A similar bill, S. 1915 (The Virgie S. Arden American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act) was introduced by Senator Ensign of Nevada in the Senate. In 2006, H.R. 503 was reintroduced and passed by the House but was not taken up by the Senate. In 2007, Congressman Whitfield of Kentucky reintroduced H.R. 503 in the House and S. 311 was introduced in the Senate by Senator Landrieu of Louisiana. To date, both bills are in committee.

Concern that the debate over legislation to prevent processing of horses for meat was driving a wedge between key groups within the horse industry and the welfare of unwanted horses was not being addressed, the AAEP hosted a meeting in Washington D.C. in the spring of 2005. Participants from breed associations, veterinary organizations, sport/discipline groups, welfare/humane groups and rescue/retirement organizations gathered to discuss the issue of unwanted horses.

As a result of the meeting, the Unwanted Horse Coalition was formed and moved under the umbrella of the American Horse Council. The mission of the coalition is "to reduce the number of unwanted horses and improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety and responsible care of the horse." The goal of the coalition is to provide a medium for the exchange of information about adoption, proper care, alternative careers and responsible ownership. This is done through a website, print material, educational forums and public service announcements. Education of horse owners about responsible

ownership, proper care and the results of haphazard breeding are key elements of the initiative. Particular attention is given to the education of potential owners about the cost of care, proper husbandry, training requirements and expectations. In addition, information about life-ending decisions and the need to euthanize rather than neglect or sell is provided. The coalition's website can be found at www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org.

The unwanted horse issue is complex and will not be resolved overnight. Hopefully, the united efforts of key equine stakeholders to develop effective strategies to improve the quality of life of unwanted horses and reduce their numbers will be successful.

Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

The Unwanted Horse: Fact or Fiction?
The Need for Real Data and Common Understandings

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"The World is not the way they tell you it is" (Adam Smith (psyu)). They tell us that things are either fact or fiction. But what if one person says it is fact, and another says it is fiction? Can it be both? Or is one person "wrong" and the other person "right"? Or is it possible that both can be "right" depending on their perspective on the issue, on their interpretation of the data? They forgot to tell us that the world also consists of faction – the state that exists when fact and fiction both seem to exist. This would be ok… if we knew it was so, and we were able to agree to disagree; but most often what occurs is a state of fractionalization whereby individuals and groups reading the same pieces of information interpret it so distinctly differently that they break off from each other – each with their own interpretations claiming one is fact and the other is fiction. One is right and the other is wrong.

The world is not the way they tell you it is – fact and fiction can exist within the same sentence depending on who is reading it. There seems to be no disagreement on the fact that there is a significant problem at hand with unwanted horses– some might even say it is a crisis, but there is real disagreement and understanding of the underlying factors, causes, and solutions. So where do you begin to tackle a problem?

The basic problem solving model in management theory begins with the identification of a problem and the search to understand why that problem exists. Then, and only then, do you apply a solution to try to solve the problem. Isn't that the approach taken by veterinarians, physicians, engineers, auto mechanics? But in our instance it appears that we have little real understanding of the extent of the problem or the real reasons for its existence. In addition, some can argue that 'solutions' have been applied without knowing whether or not they would even address the actual problem or merely attack some of the symptoms. Colleagues within a profession or an industry, who are committed to finding solutions to problems, need to be equally committed to working together, to find ways to agree to disagree and recognize that perhaps it is not right or wrong, not fact or fiction, but instead a spectrum of views – a state of faction**.**

Within this paper I will address five areas that I commonly have found to be causes of potential disagreement and/or heated discourse in terms of 'Fact or Fiction' regarding unwanted horses:

1. Unwanted horses are actually unwanted
2. We know how many unwanted horses there are
3. Unwanted horses can be absorbed into the industry through rescue facilities and other placement mechanisms
4. We know how much it costs to care for the unwanted horse population
5. Things are getting better/ Things are getting worse for unwanted horses.

At the close of the paper, the reader should have a better overview of these five 'Fact or Fiction' areas and the places where common perspectives exist. These commonalities will enable our industry to identify the facts and the common language we could agree to use. If we build where there is agreement, we can move forward to the next step in the problem solving model – identifying the information needed and determining ways it can be gathered in order to really understand what needs to happen for the well-being of these horses.

FACT OR FICTION?: UNWANTED HORSES ARE ACTUALLY UNWANTED

The first clarification defines what is meant by 'unwanted'. A scan of recent articles in the press and on the internet reveals what is often at the emotional heart of the differing views. While many of the definitions of unwanted horses identify that they may be "considered to be dangerous, or have a medical problem that makes them unusable or financially unfeasible…" (Beaver *in* Winegar), these same definitions often include language that points to other reasons for the unwanted status such as "belonging to owners whose economic outlook has changed" (Beaver *in* Winegar). The idea that "some horses weren't fast enough, some weren't good enough athletes" (Rhoden) just does not sit well with general public opinion or with many in the horse industry.

It is difficult for many to grapple with the idea that according to USDA statistics, 92% of unwanted horses are in good condition (Goydon). But 'good' means different things to different people. During a survey of horses at a processing plant, it was noted that the horses had poorer foot and body condition and were less sound than horses that would be found at a traditional sales facilities (Ishmael[a]). These animals could still be in good condition as classified by USDA standards for animal handling and transport. The distinction may be that they were not horses within the range of condition that would be anticipated to be found at a sales facility ready for purchase and immediate use by a horse owner.

Again, the definition of an unwanted horse typically includes the concept that the horse may be no longer suitable for work, may have a medical problem, the owner may have been under economic duress, etc. and all of these situations may result in poorer foot and/or body condition and/or soundness problems. Therefore, in the scenario of being useful for a horse owner, they no longer have a permanent home, they may no longer serve the original purpose, and they may no longer be sound enough, physically or mentally, to be ridden by the average horseperson. In reviewing definitions from groups who have differing views on this topic, it appears to me that the definitions of 'unwanted horses' are relatively similar. The emphasis on different parts of the definition seems to cause the most conflict. On one side are the groups wholly optimistic that these horses are not unwanted, they have just not yet been matched up with a suitable owner. On the other side are those who are not so optimistic and feel that if there were such saviors they would have already come forward – especially given the position both these horses and the rescue facilities now face and the amount of press that is being given to the topic. While there are many differing points of view on the issue, "Regardless of the reason, these horses no longer have permanent homes" (AVMA) and on that point it seems all sides can agree.

There is another item where agreement may be reached. A number of these horses have lost their permanent homes because of financial circumstances that are related to the troubling economic times. With the rising costs of living, people have to make hard choices. A Maryland reporter had the following quote from an interviewee on the topic of unwanted horses "Horses are, to a certain degree, a luxury…When the economy is suffering, luxuries are suffering" (Gardner). The economic impact of increasing costs of just about everything from daily

necessities to boarding fees and the skyrocketing costs of hay from the drought have made it more and more difficult for horse owners to make ends meet. A report in the *Los Angeles Times* states, “In many parts of the United States, horse owners are struggling to feed their animals after a severe drought doubled, even tripled the cost of hay. The drought has exacerbated a glut in the low end of the horse market, brought on by years of over-breeding and the recent economic downturn” (Jarvie). Similar articles are repeated time and again leading to this conclusion, “The only agreement among slaughter proponents and opponents is that the increased costs of fuel and food are issues for horse owners” (Hall). Even NPR radio news carried a story on the topic reporting that horse owners, particularly those in the lower economic end of the horse industry, were abandoning their horses at boarding facilities because they were unable to pay for their care and upkeep given rising costs and the downward turn of the economy (NPR National News).

Unwanted horses – are they actually unwanted? It depends on your perspective. The views are divided, the arguments are deeply embedded. Fact or fiction – faction.

FACT OR FICTION?: WE KNOW HOW MANY UNWANTED HORSES THERE ARE

It seems that most individuals and groups would agree that this is fiction – but there would be disagreement on how to count the population of horses in this category of ‘unwanted’. Is this the number of horses that would have gone to slaughter in the U.S.? Does it include those that travel across the U.S. borders? Does this number also include the number of horses that are transient – those horses living in rescue and adoption shelters waiting placement? These are horses without permanent homes. Yes, they have a home today, but the intent is to find them a ‘permanent home’ and with the perceived rate of closure of rescue facilities, it could make sense to calculate the number of horses that would have gone to slaughter along with those in transient homes in order to get a real handle on the depth and range of the problem.

There are approximately 9.2 million horses in the United States (American Horse Council) and each year a percentage of these horses become unwanted. Reports have indicated that approximately 1% of this equine population is slaughtered annually (Messer, Ishmael[b]) while others now indicate that it is closer to 1.5% (Sandberg[a]). Until recently, the majority of this occurred within the U.S. In 2006, “according to the USDA, 100,800 American horses were slaughtered in three foreign owned slaughter houses and another 30,000 were sent to Mexico and Canada” (HSUS, Heyde, Jackson). In considering Mexico alone, the increases are staggering. “According to USDA Market News Service, in 2006 11,080 horses were transported to Mexico for slaughter and in 2007 that increased 311% to 45,609 horses” (AVMA). Again, if we just consider Mexico the reported statistics for this year compared to last, given the changes in U.S. horse slaughter, the reported increase is as high as 400% according to AAEP spokesperson Sally Baker (Cockle).These statistics are equally reported by groups who have opposing views on the topic of unwanted horses, and both groups show concern over the statistics. It seems that all can agree that unwanted horses leaving the protection of U.S. borders and U.S. oversight is not a good thing.

The final piece in this group of horses is the transient population – those currently in rescue facilities. It becomes very clear in scanning material on the subject that it is very difficult to determine the number of unwanted horses currently in rescue facilities, or the capacity of rescue facilities since there is no national organization, accrediting agency or central agency for these groups. An article by Sandberg in the *San Antonio Express News* suggested that “the closest thing to it might be the web site of the American Horse Defense Fund – and no government

agency regulates them" (Sandberg[a]). The Unwanted Horse Coalition has a place on their web site that lists rescue organizations - 200 in both the United States and Canada. Yet there are no registration requirements and the Unwanted Horse Coalition does not provide any oversight (Hall). Many of these organizations do provide a host of resources as does the Humane Society of the United States, and the launch of their Homes for Horses Coalition in February added another resource for rescue organizations (HSUS). Still, the various groups might agree that there is no real data on how many unwanted horses are in rescue facilities waiting for placement to permanent homes, and at this point, there is no mutually agreed upon organization that could facilitate the coordination of a data gathering and information sharing effort.

In the end, the 100,000 number for horses slaughtered in the US seems to be used relatively consistently in articles and publications with many also acknowledging that no one really has a handle on the actual size of the unwanted horse population. "We do not have reliable statistics on the total number of horses that become unwanted each year. We do know that 90,000 to 100,000 unwanted horses have been sent to slaughter annually, and that the [total] number of unwanted horses is substantially greater than this" (AVMA frequently asked questions).

It seems that no one in any group is claiming to have a real handle on the scope of the problem. In contrast, most groups are calling for the need for real data. The Unwanted Horse Coalition has begun to gather some data as have numerous groups already mentioned in this paper. In addition, organizations such as the Equine Science Society (Arns) , the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (Arnat), the National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics (Bump), and the American Farm Bureau Federation (Ludlum) are interested in and actively supportive of finding ways to gather real information to advance the knowledge regarding 'unwanted' horses.

FACT OR FICTION?: UNWANTED HORSES CAN BE ABSORBED INTO THE INDUSTRY THROUGH RESCUE FACILITIES AND OTHER PLACEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Can these horses be absorbed into the industry or will there be no place for these horses to go? This is a fact or fiction debate. Some have felt strongly that the 'unwanted' horses that have gone to slaughter in the past "can be absorbed into current horse-rescue facilities" (Ishmael[a]). However, a review of other articles on the subject would suggest otherwise. Tom Lenz of the Unwanted Horse Coalition said "6,000 to 10,000 horses a year can be rescued but both he and Pereschino said the rescue sites can't handle all the unwanteds" (Hall). It is clear that this is a topic of much debate, and it seems that in part this may due to the inability to know and project the current and future capacity of rescue facilities (Messer).

If the current capacity is unknown as is suggested by Messer, then perhaps it is better to work backwards from the number of horses that need care to determine how many rescue facilities would be needed. According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners, that number would be 2700 facilities for the first year of a full ban, with an assumption that there are 30 horses in each facility (AVMA). They suggest that another 2700 new facilities could be needed each subsequent year if the number of additional unwanted horses remained constant and none of the rescued horses died or were placed in permanent homes (AVMA). Those numbers are, however, debated by horse rescuers such as Jerry Finch who in a *Houston Chronicle* article was represented as suggesting that "the numbers going to slaughter are negligible and said such horses could easily be absorbed by rescue groups and families if slaughter was no longer an option" (Sandberg[b]). According to horse rescue advocate John Holland, "It is rare that a

population of any kind cannot absorb such a small increase or decrease in supply" (Holland). While in theory this seems to make sense, in reality we don't know if this will hold true.

There is little doubt that there exists significant disagreement over the capability and the capacity of rescue facilities to successfully absorb the 'unwanted' horse population given the current situation of state closure of U.S. slaughter plants. This fact or fiction seems to rest on faction. However, perhaps some agreement can be reached on a subsequent point. There would be a real benefit in gathering data on the number of rescue organizations in existence, the number of horses currently under care, and the current capacity. In order to do this, it seems there needs to be some agreement on a central oversight and organizing body for rescue facilities and other placement organizations.

FACT OR FICTION?: WE KNOW HOW MUCH IT COSTS TO CARE FOR THE 'UNWANTED' HORSE POPULATION

Do we really know how to budget for the care of this population of horses? According to the Animal Welfare Council, the cost will be $220 million each year based on 2005 statistics (Ishmael[a]). However, the topic of cost estimates is again a topic of fact or fiction – particularly as the costs are projected forward to subsequent years. It has been suggested by Congressman Bob Goodlattte of Virginia, that the projected number of surplus horses will result in a cost of $530 million by 2016 (Holland). This has been met with opposition by those who feel strongly that the cost of caring for unwanted horses will decrease each year as fewer unwanted horses enter into the horse industry and more places to care for unwanted horses emerge.

John Holland proposes the use of a fixed percentage rather than a fixed number to calculate a projected cost, arguing that it is more reasonable that the unwanted horse situation should be viewed as a supply and demand commodity whereby once the slaughter houses are closed, the demand will diminish and so will the supply. Therefore the total number of unwanted horses will diminish each year thereby reducing the overall cost to care for them. If his theory were to hold true, the cost estimate to care for the unwanted horse population would dramatically decrease over time rather than dramatically increase as has been proposed by others (Holland).

The lesser debate is the estimated daily cost of caring for an unwanted horse. Horses can live into their 30's and according to the Unwanted Horse Coalition, the low end of the price scale for care of cost for a horse is $1,800 annually. Breaking that out to a daily cost, without consideration of veterinary and farrier care, the estimate is $5 per day by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (Copeland). However, "caring for a horse with special needs that requires extensive veterinary care can easily double or triple this figure" (Bourgeois). It is important to keep this in mind; it is not uncommon for unwanted horses to require this kind of care, particularly in their early stages of arrival at a rescue facility, as has been noted both in surveys of horses at processing plants (Ishmael[a]) and by those operating rescue facilities (Prada, Sandberg[b]). Additionally, given the potential life span of a horse, the following quote seems particularly noteworthy, "Unfortunately it takes a lot of money to take care of an old horse and we are not in a situation to provide nursing home care for animals in our program"(Robinson).

In researching the views on this topic, it seems that there is some consistency on the idea of daily costs, but much debate on the overall long term-economic impact. This has seemed to cause much fractionalization within the horse industry as well as the general public. Who will pay for these horses and what will be the source of the funds? There is a web site on the internet called

the 3 Trillion Dollar Shopping Spree (3trillion.org) that asks if you can spend $3 Trillion better than the Government – and if so, where would you spend it? Included in the various things you can 'buy' is "create and fund sanctuaries for unwanted, neglected and abused horses, donkeys and mules in the U.S. for 6 months" and the price tag listed is $2.5 Billion. It doesn't identify how they arrived at this number – a fact or fiction debate for sure – but what is compelling is to look at that figure in comparison to other items you can "buy", things like "Achieve Universal Literacy" listed with a price tag of $5 Billion or "Cure a Deadly Disease" for $1.5 Million. Regardless of whether the prices listed are right or wrong, Fact or Fiction, there are choices to be made about how money will be spent and who should spend it.

Do we know how much it will cost to care for this population of horses? Fact or fiction – faction in the sense that perhaps in the short term we can provide estimates on a per horse basis but it seems clear that we are unable to have a real sense of what is needed in regard to the complete population. In addition, it would seem that a conversation regarding funding is a necessity. Whether it is a yearly number or a daily number, a fixed number or a fixed percentage, someone will have to budget for these horses and money will have to come from somewhere to cover the expenses.

FACT OR FICTION?: THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER FOR 'UNWANTED HORSES'

On the one hand, rescue facilities are getting more phone calls and taking in more horses (Dorell, Hall, Hiers, Sandberg[b] , Thomas, Prada) – and that could point to a better situation – that unwanted horses are finding their way to rescue organizations. However, those 'homes' are temporary – a respite along the way to a permanent home. Still, the horse has found someone who wants to care for it. In that sense it is, perhaps, wanted. Chris Heyde, deputy legislative director with the Animal Welfare Institute believes, as do others, that the country can handle these unwanted horses. "You can find a home for these horses" Heyde says - "Most people do" (Dorell).

On the other hand, rescue facilities are getting more phone calls and taking in more horses (Chavez, Dorell, Hall, Hiers, Sandberg[b], Thomas, Prada) – and that could point to a worsening situation- facilities are saying they can not take in all the horses, or if they do, they are stretched beyond their capabilities (Chavez, Dorell, Sandberg[b], Thomas, Prada, *Denver News*). A number of rescue facilities already operate on the brink of exasperation and a rapid influx by well-meaning horse lovers unable to say no could result in unintended harm and the need to rescue horses from rescue organizations. It could result in an uptick in horse hoarders and an uptick in animal abuse – often unintended. In addition, reports of animals abandoned, turned loose, and turned out into other horse owner's pastures and facilities appear to be escalating (Cockle, La Valley, NPR News, Prada, Thomas).

News coverage of the issue seems to cross the nation and, it does so in all forms of media from small town news media to big time broadcasts including *The Wall Street Journal (Prada), Time Magazine (Waller), USA Today (Dorell), HBO Real Sports* with Bryant Gumbell (Gumbell) and *NPR National News* to name a few. Through each article review I rarely see anything that says things are getting, or have gotten, better for these horses. I wonder - how can so many people, working so hard, be making such little progress? Is this fact or is this fiction?

FACT OR FICTION – WE WILL MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER AS AN INDUSTRY

I read an article by Rob Whiteley after the tragedy of Eight Belles and I am going to borrow some of his thoughts and words because I think they parallel where we are with this topic. "Change can come, but it will only come as a result of a unified effort…. We horseman are mostly independent minded and competitive people who like to do our own thing. Therefore, the idea of unity may seem alien or objectionable to many of us….[but] United we stand, divided we fall" (Whiteley). At this point we need to set aside our ideas of fact or fiction and no longer be fractionalized. We need to build on what we have in common, which is first and foremost, our love of the horse. We need to set aside our differences for the common good. It is time that we stop talking about what we think we know and start talking about what we don't know. When we acknowledge what we don't know, the real learning will begin and real progress will happen. The fact is that we do not know if things are getting better or if things are getting worse – and we need to know.

If past performance is a predictor of future behavior, the idea that we would move forward together as an *industr*y would most likely be fiction. But times of crisis can change a prediction model, and human choice coupled with determination can as well. If we each decide to view the topic differently so that we see each piece of information from several perspectives, these unwanted horses would be better-served. If we decided to pool all of our resources together rather than be fractionalized, these horses will be helped significantly. Collaboration will be key.

Where would we be one year from now if all of us agreed upon a single organization that would be a point for data gathering? What would we learn if we collected information to evaluate the real costs associated with care of these horses? Would we have more information for planning and decision making? Information could be gathered on the soundness, body condition, usability, age, gender and the average length of time until adoption. How much farther would we be in our knowledge one year from now? We would have real data based on a collaborative effort and the confidence in the information would be much higher as a result. We might actually be able to say we had some facts.

In New York, a Governor's Task Force has been created to work on one aspect of the unwanted horse dilemma – understanding the issues surrounding 'retired' race horses, both standardbreds and thoroughbreds, and finding new career opportunities for these horses at the point that they retire from racing on NY tracks (Post). Potential careers for sound horses are certainly more obvious than those for horses which can not readily move into other performance arenas, but the opportunities are still there and many appear to be waiting to be fully tapped. The largest of these opportunities may be in programs involved with various forms of human therapy that would not necessarily require a horse to be ridden or driven.

In order to more fully understand the issues and dilemmas associated with retired race horses, the New York State Retired Race Horse Task Force is currently developing a survey tool to be used in New York. The questions on the survey are anticipated to include some of the following types of questions:

1. For what reasons are horses most often retired?
2. To what locations were horses retired/what kind of arrangements were made?
3. How many of the retired horses were sound at retirement, unsound at retirement?
4. What was the age and sex of each horse retired?
5. What class did the horse run its last race in prior to retiring?
6. What were the earnings of the horse prior to retiring?

7. Is there a perception that there are buyers for retired race horses? If yes, what kinds of horses have more buyers?
8. What networks are currently used to place retired race horses?
9. Would respondents (and have respondents) taken back horses they bred when they retired?
10. Would respondents pay to retire a horse? If yes, under what conditions and how much would they pay?
11. Would they support a voluntary (or mandatory) payment fund to support retirement programs (with a list of potential funding sources including registration fees, racing fees, % of purses, etc.)

The NY State initiative is a positive step for race horses, but it is important to point out that it is a State initiative and addresses only one subset of the equine population. What would happen if we had a national movement to gather parallel data that crossed states as well as breed and discipline associations? It might be hard to agree on one single organization for oversight and coordination of such a project, as we know horse people are "pretty independent minded" (Whiteley). But I think we can do it. We will have a better chance if we can get beyond one of the themes of the unwanted horse issue that has grown throughout the past several years, the theme of blame. Unwanted horses are the fault of X. From my perspective there is enough blame for everyone in the horse industry to accept a role. If you or anyone in your family has ever cared for, ridden, shown, leased, or owned a horse that was then sold, then you have in some way participated in the unwanted horse cycle. Keep in mind that the American Horse Council estimates that the average horse owner has a horse for 4.5 years. Beyond the host of reasons already covered in this paper that probably culminate in the 4.5 year statistic is also the fact that the horse industry is a livestock industry with professionals who breed, raise, train, sell, and buy horses. We may think of horses as companion animals, and we may treat them as our companions while they are with us, but most dogs and cat owners don't buy and sell dogs and cats the way we buy and sell horses. Horses are livestock, not pets. Still, the moment we let go of a horse – whether that horse was professionally or recreationally owned, or watch a horse that has in some way been part of our lives go to a new 'home', we have in some way participated in the unwanted horse cycle because at the moment we let go, we made the decision we did not want, or could no longer keep, that horse. At that point the horse became a horse in search of a new home and even if a new home was found then, will another be found the next time?

If just about everyone has had a role, where would we be one year from now if everyone in the industry shared in working on this industry wide problem? Where would we be if every breed association created retirement foundations? We have several breed-based retirement foundations already in place and other associations could certainly follow. What if every breed association added an amount to their membership fee and/or their horse registration fee and that fee supported rescue and retirement efforts – either for that breed or industry wide. What if we all paid an extra nickel on each bag of feed as a funding stream? The Maryland Horse Industry Fund has a horse promotion program that operates using this model and they estimate that the out-of-pocket expense to the average horse owner is less than $3 per horse per year, yet collectively the total funds add up quickly. There are no doubt a variety of systematic ways we could begin to actively address the funding issues involved with unwanted horses in order to directly assist and further develop programs and plans for unwanted horses. Are we ready to do so?

In order to move forward as an industry it seems that two things are important. First, all of the various groups need to join together and collaborate. Second, everyone needs to participate in

the elimination of placing blame for the current problem and focus collective energies on working to understand the problem and find real answers and solutions. Rather than a state of fractionalization let's move forward with the energy of collaboration. We need real data and common understanding and that will require all of us working together. The horses are counting on us.

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Panel: What is the Federal Role in Creating Viable Solutions to the Unwanted Horse Issue?

The Honorable Ed Whitfield, R-KY
Washington, DC

A last minute conflict prevented Mr. Whitfield from participating. A paper and a power point were not provided.

Panel: What is the Federal Role in Creating Viable Solutions to the Unwanted Horse Issue?

The Honorable Charles W. Stenholm
Olsson, Frank and Weeda, P.C.
Washington, DC

A paper and a power point were not provided.

Panel: Transportation Issues: Knowns and Unknowns

Commercial Transportation of Horses to Slaughter in the United States Knowns and Unknowns

Tim Cordes
USDA/APHIS/VS
Riverdale, MD

KNOWNS: HISTORY, STANDARDS, AND STATISTICS

One of the responsibilities of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the 1996 Farm Bill was to regulate the commercial transportation of horses to slaughter. The Secretary of Agriculture delegated authority to the Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services (VS). In fulfilling this responsibility, VS initiated a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors. Opinions were gathered from various animal welfare groups — as well as research findings by leading experts in the fields of animal handling, animal stress, and transportation. The USDA working group included representatives from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS/VS), Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the Office of General Council (OGC). VS was invited to stakeholder meetings which included representatives from the equine industry, horse welfare groups, auction terminals, horse processing plants, trucking industry, and the research and veterinary communities. USDA funded research was performed by Colorado State University on the physical conditions of horses arriving at slaughter plants, by Texas A&M University on the effects of water deprivation in equines, and the University of California, Davis on stress in equines shipped to slaughter facilities. The collaborative recommendations and findings of these USDA, stakeholder, and research groups were as follows:

1. Separate stallions and other aggressive horses from the rest of the shipment.

2. Provide adequate food, water, and rest six (6) hours prior to loading onto a vehicle.

3. Confine horses in a vehicle no longer than 24 (+4?) hours without food and water.

4. Utilize an owner/shipper certificate.

5. Provide adequate floor space.

6. Phase out two-tier trailers.

The Slaughter Horse Transport Program (SHTP) goal was established and remains constant to this day as follows: if a horse must be transported commercially to slaughter, then it will travel in a safe and humane fashion. The program is often cited as a model for the future development of humane transportation programs for other species. The final rule on humane transportation of horses to slaughter was published in the Federal Register on December 7, 2001 . All of the aforementioned recommendations were incorporated into the regulations found in 9 CFR Part 88.

The regulations provide for a complete domestic and international monitoring of the movement of U.S.-origin horses to slaughter through the use of owner /shipper certificates and corresponding backtags. Regardless of whether U.S.-origin horses are processed in the U.S., Canada, or Mexico, the owner/shipper certificates are returned to VS headquarters where all information contained in the certificates are entered into a single database.

The SHTP owner/shipper certificate documents compliance with the regulations which prohibit the transportation of a horse that is (a) unable to bear weight on four limbs, (b) unable to walk unassisted, (c) blind in both eyes, (d) a foal under 6 months of age, and (e) a pregnant mare that is likely to foal (give birth) during the trip. It must be signed by the owner/shipper and is collected by the USDA/FSIS at U.S. slaughter plants. It is collected by the host country officials at the slaughter plants in Canada and the border crossings into Mexico. This certificate was designed to be a trace-back tool to investigate and document program violations. However, it can also be used to provide limited information on the population of horses intended for slaughter. If we query the SHTP database for data each year regarding the (1) addresses of owner/shippers, (2) gender and (3) type of slaughter horses, and (4) horse processing plants of destination, we find informative trends respectively as follows:

1. Owner/shipper operations average 1-3 in most states with few, if any, in coastal states.

2. Stallions represent 3-4% of the total consistent with the gender distribution in the national U.S. horse population (Stull, 1999) (1).

3. Numbers of horses by breeds/types are consistent with the national U.S. horse population (by registry statistics) (2).

4. Movement to plants in Mexico and Canada has roughly tripled and doubled respectively in 2007 (3).

Administrative judges in Washington, D.C. began hearing cases on violations of the SHTP in June of 2006. To date, there have been five (5) adjudicated or default decisions with penalty awards totaling $135,000. Out of court, there have been three (3) settled cases with settlement amounts totaling $23,000.

UNKNOWNS: FUTURE OF THE SHTP SHOULD HORSE PROCESSING FACILITIES NOT OPEN AGAIN

1. It is anticipated that unwanted U.S. horses intended for slaughter will continue to be transported to and processed in plants in Canada and Mexico.

2. The Veterinary Services (VS) Slaughter Horse Transport Program (SHTP) will remain active in the field and at headquarters. Although U.S. plants that process horses will be closed and therefore not staffed by SHTP Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO) and Animal Health Technicians (AHT), Canadian and Mexican border crossings and Canadian plants will be regularly visited. SHTP Owner/Shipper Certificates (VS Forms 10-13) will continue to be received at headquarters from all of the Canadian plants and the Mexican border crossings.

3. The slaughter horse industry divides horses into slaughter horses and non-slaughter horses or all others. It is likely that most horses will move through the standard channels as slaughter horses with SHTP owner/shipper certificates and backtags. However, in an attempt to circumvent program regulations (9 CFR 88.4), an increasing number may move as non-slaughter horses with Coggins (EIA) tests. The SHTP has no jurisdiction over non-slaughter horses moved in compliance with interstate or international animal health regulations.

4. Currently there are seven (7) CFIA plants and two (2) SAGARPA EU-approved plants that process horse meat for human consumption.

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2. The most current “Total Registered” numbers are compared as relative percentages for the American Quarter Horse Association, Jockey Club, and multiple draft and pony registries.

3. SHTP database statistics are generated from information contained within and entered from the Owner/Shipper Certificates (VS Forms 10-13).

Panel: Transportation Issues: Knowns and Unknowns

Executive Summary: The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

Jennifer Woods
J. Woods Livestock Services
Alberta, Canada

Calgary, AB, February 12, 2008: A report on horses as food producing animals has been completed by the Alberta Equine Welfare Group. It presents facts on the humane treatment of horses processed in Alberta and Canada for food, identifies areas that need improvement and spells out the impact of the closure of horse meat plants in the US. The aim is to provide a base of information to encourage constructive, open communication on a sensitive issue and address ways to continually improve horse welfare.

The Alberta Equine Welfare Group is comprised of representatives from Alberta Equestrian Federation, the Horse Industry Association of Alberta, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, Alberta SPCA, the RCMP, University of Alberta, meat processors, feedlot owners, horse buyers and Alberta Agriculture and Food. Most are members of Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), the organization providing project management services for the group.

The report includes historical data on horse meat consumption. Over one billion people or 16% of the world population eat horse meat. Consumption of horse meat has increased 27% since 1990. In terms of nutritional value, horse meat has 20% more protein and double the iron of beef. Among others, Asians, Europeans and Canadians eat horse meat.

Humane treatment of horses throughout their lifetime and at death is a priority. The report highlights Canadian legislation that is in place and is enforced to ensure the humane treatment of horses, at the farm, at auctions, while in transport and at all federally inspected meat plants. In addition, the report details the USDA regulation that states US horses transported to Canadian meat plants must go on single deck trailers and be inspected by USDA and CFIA veterinarians. The reports notes recent gaps in the adherence to this rule and notes Alberta horse industry requests for action to fix this. Unlike many US states, livestock are not exempt from Canada's animal protection laws. Studies done by AFAC and the Alberta SPCA and by Dr. T. Grandin point to original owner induced neglect as the core equine welfare concern. The report identifies recommendations to improve this.

The report includes a description of the horse industry in Alberta with respect to horses as food producing animal. Many horses are purpose-raised for meat production. The types of horses received at the Alberta horse meat plant and the humane handling practices in place are outlined. Before the US horse plants closed in 2007, 50,000 horses were processed in Canada for human consumption. By the end of 2007, this number had doubled. A new plant has opened in Saskatchewan with a capacity equal to the Alberta plant. The number of horses imported into Canada has increased by 40%. The report describes euthanasia options available to horse owners in Alberta. The associated costs and benefits are discussed.

People tend to view their horse as livestock, as working animals or as companion animals. These different viewpoints are acknowledged in this report. What is important is that all horses

be treated humanely throughout their lifetime. This must include options for humanely ending the horse's life. This is ultimately the choice of the horse's owner.
It is well known that horse meat plants in the US have been closed as a result of pressure from organizations opposed to horses as a meat producing animal. This report tells of the actions and the resulting consequences of growing horse neglect, abandonment and starvation.

The Alberta Equine Welfare Group believes that processing horses for food is a humane end to a horse's life. This group is committed, and encourages other horse industry groups, to seek the continuous improvement of equine welfare and develop open communication to increase the awareness of the humane approaches to husbandry, handling, transporting and processing of horses in Canada.

The complete report is available at **http://www.albertaequestrian.com/**. Contact S. Church at 403-932-8050.

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

Little Brook Farm Offers Humane Alternatives for the "Unwanted" Horse

Lynn Cross
Little Brook Farm: An Equine
Educational Center and Sanctuary
Old Chatham NY

Located on 55 acres in the hamlet of Old Chatham, NY, Little Brook Farm is a sanctuary for over 130 animals. Established in 1972, this rescue effort is one of the oldest and largest in the Northeast.

In 1986, B.I.T.S. was created. Balanced Innovative Teaching Strategies, Inc. combines a multi-faceted educational approach with both traditional and therapeutic riding instruction. Presently, B.I.T.S. provides services to more than 80 schools, agencies and organizations, entirely through the use of previously "unwanted" horses. Over 2,000 individuals participate annually. B.I.T.S., a non-profit (501-C3) entity, has been recognized by the New York State Department of Education as "exemplary".

Little Brook Farm directly cares for 50 horses representing 18 breeds with an additional 23 in adoptive homes (which must return the horses if they can no longer keep them). It is our policy to never buy (unless it is per pound) nor sell or breed and to humanely euthanize a horse only when their quality of life is compromised.

There is a common misconception that "unwanted" horses are old and/or lame when they are typically young and potentially useful. Statistics on 70 horses rescued from intended slaughter by Little Brook Farm during the 5 year period from 2001-2006, illustrate the fact that 46% were 6 months of age to 9 years; 37% 10-15 yrs.; 4%; 16-20; and 13% 21-35. Given a life expectancy of 30+ years for a well-cared for horse, fully 87%, which must be considered representative of the for-slaughter market, have time for rehabilitation and meaningful, useful companionship.

Unlike the typical rescue or sanctuary, the majority of our horses contribute on some level to their own care through lessons, lease or educational programs. They also successfully compete in Dressage, Hunter Seat, Eventing, Competitive Trail Riding and Pony Club Rallys, as well as other disciplines. This visibility places them in a position to raise awareness as to the true value of the "unwanted" horse. Last fall, Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand unexpectedly attended one of LBF's horse shows during the vaulting demonstration. She took the time for a tour and has since changed her position on the slaughter issue in favor of the horses - a decision which is deeply appreciated.

There is an obvious benefit for the "unwanted" horse through rescue, rehab and ongoing supportive care. Equally beneficial however, are the vast educational and vocational opportunities horses offer students. Little Brook Farm and the B.I.T.S. program have successfully blended "unwanted" horses and educational programs by prioritizing the physical safety and emotional well-being of our students which then, by default, allows our horses to receive the

same. In order to achieve the greatest results, the partnership of horse and teacher is crucial. Strengthened by time and patience, a long term relationship is an absolute necessity.

Placing the best interests of the students and horses over profit has required a creative approach to financial management. Operating costs are significant and resources have always been limited (B.I.T.S. 2007, 990-EZ was $85,285.). Our solutions have evolved over time to include the following:

1. Providing traditional riding instruction and summer camps (see attached flyer).

2. Participation of schools, youth groups and organizations for which we are paid on a sliding scale (actual list provided upon request).

3. Schools serving those with special needs, schedule class trips bringing the children's therapists with them thus eliminating B.I.T.S.' responsibility to provide Physical, Occupational and/or Speech Therapists.

4. Fundraising events such as horse shows, clinics, weddings on site.

5. Donations generated from random news stories.

6. A silent corporate sponsor generously contributes a fixed amount monthly in addition to the wages of 2 paid staff.

7. Individual sponsors donate each month towards the care of a specific horse who they visit on a regular basis.

8. Various local landowners allow LBF to use approximately 35 acres of pasture at no cost (all have 4 board fence, barns, potable water). LBF assumes complete physical/financial care of the horses and offers owners LBF's agricultural tax benefits and/or care of the owner's private horses.

9. Grants.

10. Twelve working students, both high school and college. An exchange may include: room and board, transportation including gas, riding and lessons.

11. Volunteers/board members contribute approximately 70 hours each week.

12. Local excavation company trades the use of an acre of our land for topsoil and is always available - any time, any location, any weather conditions to bury a horse.

13. One of our 2 farriers donates all of his work (trims), the second donates 1 out of every 6 (shoeing).

14. Our vet (of 25 yrs) comes for any emergency at any time within minutes of the call. He allows me to pay over time with no penalties.

Little Brook Farm, as an equine educational center, places a great deal of emphasis on responsibility. It is our duty to provide for horses throughout their life and ensure them a dignified

death. Equine cruelty is the fear driving the opposition for the ban on slaughter. Yet, the prolonged suffering and brutality of slaughter *is* equine cruelty and should never be an option.

It is understood that there are more horses than available homes, therefore, continuing to breed without consequences is intolerable. By adding a fee for each breeding and registration, funds would be available for rescues, sanctuaries and the ultimate euthanasia of “unwanted” horses.

In the summer of 2007, Little Brook Farm had the privilege of hosting a clinic with Linda Tellington-Jones, an internationally acclaimed authority on animal behavior, training and healing. She stated that while there are many patterns for rescues, this is one that should be duplicated and has offered to serve on our advisory board. Little Brook Farm and B.I.T.S. is a viable model and could be expanded and recreated in other locations throughout the country.

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?" Potential Solutions and Options

Tom Persechino
American Quarter Horse Association

To millions of Americans, horses have long been magical, mystical creatures that have carried us when even our own legs couldn't, brought us joy when no other human understood us and teamed with us to settle a nation. Our horses ask for so little, and yet they're willing to give so much. In many ways, horses were man's best friend long before the first canines assumed that title. Often, our horses become part of the family and transcend the role of traditional pet. They become our trusted equine counterparts.

Because of that bond and in a perfect world, it would be ideal for every horse to live out its days in rich green pastures or in our backyards. Unfortunately, that's not always the case because all horses and all owners are not created equally.

Just as you'll find dogs and cats in shelters with behavior problems, health issues or owners who simply cannot afford to keep them, those same situations play out in the equine world – only with larger ramifications. You're talking about a 1,000-pound animal that is expensive to feed and care for, can be dangerous if not properly trained and for whom even euthanasia is expensive. Slaughter is no longer an option, and publicly funded shelters for horses are not widely available. So what are owners to do?

Understanding options for the unwanted, unneeded or unusable horse is one of those topics we must all address if we're ever going to ensure that our horses' health and welfare truly are paramount to every other consideration.

When considering an unwanted or unusable horse, we need to be realistic. No matter what we discuss and no matter how many laws we might pass we will never prevent all horses from becoming unwanted – just as we can't prevent a certain number of dogs and cats from becoming unwanted. However, by discussing the issue and seriously dedicating ourselves to bringing forth viable solutions, we can strive to make life easier for those horses that do end up in the equine welfare system. Whatever the reasons, many horse owners will face the difficult decision of dealing with an unwanted or unusable horse. *What are some of their options?*

EDUCATION AND OVER BREEDING

To some, a simple solution to "fix" the unwanted horse situation is to simply stop breeding as many horses or force the various breed associations to limit the number of horses they allow to be registered each year. On the surface this might sound simple, but forbidding people to breed horses isn't as easy as it might appear. As breed registries, the associations' primary roles are to record the pedigrees of horses. It is not their role to restrict any breeder's right to breed their horses. In fact, courts have ruled that in certain cases, it is a restraint of trade to do so.

However, clearly, education is a key to alleviating some of America's unwanted and unneeded horses, and as an industry we need to work to better educate horse owners on responsibilities that come with owning a horse. The issue of education is being addressed nationally through the efforts of the Unwanted Horse Coalition of which the American Quarter Horse Association is a founding member.

Formed in 2005, the Unwanted Horse Coalition represents a broad alliance of equine organizations that have joined together under the American Horse Council to educate the horse industry about the unwanted horse issue. The Coalition brings together key stakeholders to develop consensus on the most effective ways to work together to address this issue of America's unwanted horses.

> ***The mission of the Unwanted Horse Coalition is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and to improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety, and responsible care and disposition of these horses.***

Today, the coalition comprises 24 organizations that include horse breed associations, veterinary organizations and stock contractors, among others.

Central to the coalition's mission is its "Own Responsibly" adage that focuses on education. By educating existing and potential owners, breeders, sellers and horse organizations about the long-term responsibilities of owning and caring for horses, and focusing on opportunities available for these horses, the coalition hopes to help horses before they become unwanted. The UHC hopes to utilize industry resources to put owners of these horses in touch with individuals and facilities that will welcome them. The coalition believes teaching people to own responsibly will help lower the number of unwanted horses.

Education has been a fundamental part of AQHA for decades. As part of the association's ongoing efforts and to fully support the Unwanted Horse Coalition, AQHA has just released a DVD that it provides free of charge – only a $5 shipping fee applies – to anyone interested in horse ownership. This educational DVD talks about the many aspects of horse ownership and educates people on the costs and responsibilities of owning a horse. Additionally, AQHA recently introduced a comprehensive Fundamentals of Horsemanship program designed to help people create a better relationship with their horse by learning better training techniques.

By educating potential and current owners, fewer horses will become unwanted because people will better understand the issues that surround horse ownership. Despite these efforts, some owners will still find themselves with an unwanted or unusable horse.

Let's define those terms. *Unwanted* horses no longer fit into their owners' lives, for reasons discussed above or because of other contributing factors. They are healthy enough to enjoy life, but perhaps it's time for them to find a new purpose. They are still usable – even if it's in a diminished capacity. *Unusable* horses are those who are in poor health – because of illness, age or injury. Unmanageable, dangerous horses also fall into this category. They are a burden to their owners, and it would be the height of irresponsibility to sell or give horses like this to another person, or to risk them being abused, neglected or abandoned because a future owner can no longer deal with them.

It's important to candidly assess which category a horse falls into, and there are different options for each one. For owners who believe a horse still has some use, there is good news and a number of options.

USABLE HORSE OPTIONS

Rescue and Retirement Facilities

Probably the most obvious are rescue and retirement facilities. Rescue and retirement facilities can play a key role in providing care or finding new owners for horses that are considered unwanted.

While the actual number of facilities is unknown, it is widely believed that existing ones are at or near capacity in terms of numbers of horses and resources to care for them. It simply stands to reason that more will have to be established if this is going to be a primary option.

Additionally, if the existing equine welfare system is going to be expected to absorb more unwanted horses – regardless of the number – guidelines for these facilities must be established in order to ensure the horses' best interest are paramount. While the majority of rescue and retirement facilities provide adequate care, a small minority of rescue/retirement facilities do not and cast a shadow over the legitimate ones.

While the vast majority of rescue and retirement facilities are run honestly, if our goal is to protect horses then serious steps must be taken on the horse's behalf. Until such legislation exists, the UHC encourages owners to read the **"Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities,"** developed by the American Association of Equine Practitioners and ensure the facility being considered operates by these guidelines. A partial list of equine rescue and retirement facilities can be found by using any search engine on the World Wide Web or by contacting the American Horse Council.

Friends With Land

Many horse owners have friends who own acreage that is suitable for horses (safe fencing and sufficient access to good grass and water). Perhaps there is an opportunity for some owners to ask a friend if they can retire a horse to his pasture. In some cases, the owner of the horse might offer a nominal payment each month for the retirement. However, if a horse has injuries or health problems, pasturing might not be a good option unless the horse can get regular veterinary attention.

Colleges and Universities

Many colleges and universities use horses for their equine programs or for research programs that benefit the industry. Selection criteria for horses will vary according to the university, but as an option, an owner should check in his or her state (or neighboring states) to see if there are colleges or universities that would be willing to take a horse. In many cases, these horses receive excellent care from the students attending the school.

North American Riding for the Handicapped Association Inc. (NARHA)

Members of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association foster safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards and research for people with and without disabilities. NARHA promotes equine - facilitated therapy and activity programs in the United States and Canada. More than 650 NARHA program centers serve 30,000 individuals with disabilities. Each year, dozens of new centers initiate programs, and thousands of individuals profit from these beneficial activities. NAHRA has stringent care guidelines for horses at these facilities.

At NARHA centers, horses are valued partners in a relationship and the centers are highly selective, accepting only horses that are well-suited for equine-assisted therapy. Many horses at NARHA centers are donated, volunteered or leased by horse owners in the community.
It is important to note that minor health issues in a horse might be acceptable. However, horses must be sound enough to work regularly. Above all, safety is a top concern, and horses donated to a NARHA facility must have the correct temperament.

Centers will evaluate and observe a prospective horse's:

1. Conformation

2, Health

3, Age

4, Gaits and manner of going

5, Attitude, reliability and adaptability

By donating a horse, an owner not only assists individuals with disabilities, but might also be eligible for a tax deduction. In many instances, an owner can develop an ongoing giving campaign with the NARHA center that has accepted a horse and enjoy the tax benefits for years to come. Owners should note that if a horse is accepted by a NARHA facility and for any reason doesn't fit their program at a later date, the facility has the option of selling the horse. A list of NAHRA facilities is available at **www.narha.org.**

New Careers

Depending on the horse's health and soundness, a second career might be a viable option. For example, many American Quarter Horse race horses go on to become outstanding speed-event horses in the show arena or top mounts for ropers and other cowboys competing in rodeo events.

If a horse excelled in the show ring, an owner might consider giving him to a young person in 4-H or someone just beginning his or her show career. Again, depending on the horse's overall health, an older horse that one owner might consider past his prime could be the perfect teacher for a young person or new competitor.

A second career could include public service. Thousands of horses are serving as police mounts, in U.S. Border Patrol units, patrolling America's parks, working in correctional facilities and assisting search-and-rescue operations. Owners should look around their area and visit with police, sheriff and parks departments to see if they have mounted units.

UNUSABLE HORSE OPTIONS

Euthanasia

When it comes to the unfortunate task of seeking alternatives for the unusable horse or if it's simply impractical to continue a horse's life, there are fewer options available. Although euthanasia is a difficult decision, it gives the owner total control over the way a horse's life comes to a conclusion. Additionally, euthanasia can be the most humane way to deal with end-of-life decisions. Certainly, it is more humane than neglect or abandonment. The decision to euthanize a horse should be based on both medical considerations, as well as the horse's current and future quality of life.

The following criteria suggested by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (not all criteria need to be met for every case) should be considered in evaluating the necessity for euthanization of a horse:

1. Is the horse's condition chronic, incurable and resulting in unnecessary pain and suffering?

2. Does the horse's condition present a hopeless prognosis for life?

3. Is the horse a hazard to itself, other horses or humans?

4. Will the horse require continuous medication for the relief of pain and suffering for the remainder of its life?

5. If the horse is suffering but treatable, is proper and recommended care of the horse within the means of the owner or rescue/retirement facility, such that the health and safety of the other horses are not compromised?

6. Is the horse constantly and in the foreseeable future unable to move unassisted, interact with other horses, or exhibiting behaviors that prohibit a decent quality of life?

When it's time to make this difficult end-of-life decision, it is recommended that an owner contact an American Association of Equine Practitioners veterinarian to handle the euthanasia process and disposal of the horse. In many areas of the country, there are laws governing the burial or disposal of horses following euthanasia via intravenous anesthetic. Owners need to be aware of these regulations, as well as the costs associated with euthanasia and disposal, which can reach several hundred dollars. Because many municipalities have regulations that restrict where and how a chemically euthanized horse can be disposed, if a ban on horse processing is to continue,

Congress needs to explore the option of publicly funded euthanasia facilities akin to animal shelters that accept small animals now.

Recently, AQHA attempted to call the largest 100 metropolitan areas – or designated market areas as defined by the federal Government Office of Management and Budget – to see if their public animal shelter had the capability of taking unwanted or unusable horses. AQHA's study revealed that of the 70 shelters we reached only four had the capacity to handle horses. Until there are widespread, publicly funded facilities to take horses – such as those that exist for dogs and cats – the welfare of America's unusable horses will be at risk. The horse industry, humane groups and the United States government need concrete statistics on the availability of facilities and the accessibility of affordable euthanasia as we develop viable solutions.

Research Programs

Depending upon a horse's level of usability and medical condition, many university veterinary programs are looking for horses that can be used in research projects. In some cases, donating a horse to a research program could lead to better care or even cures for diseases and disorders that would benefit all horses. Owners can ask an AAEP or American Veterinary Medical Association veterinarian for advice.

Legislative options

Obviously, our efforts cannot stop with what has already been done. Because this issue has been before Congress, perhaps there are other options that can be discussed with our elected officials, both locally and in Washington. Is there a common ground that could be supported by a good portion of the horse industry?

Clearly, the closing of the United States' three equine processing facilities *has not* meant better care for horses nor a better horse industry overall. But we're not here to debate the merits of horse slaughter. Should we, though, be speaking with our elected officials about ways to protect our horses that makes sense and is based on facts, not beliefs or feelings?

For instance, because city animal shelters are ill-equipped to take in horses, should we explore legislation to establish publicly funded equine shelters like we do for dogs and cats? Horses would have a certain number of days to be adopted out and, after being given the chance, would be humanely put down.

Because education plays a key role in reducing the number of unwanted horses, can an educational grant program be implemented through the United States Department of Agriculture where nonprofit horse industry organizations could apply for funding to develop and implement educational programs, similar to what is being done with the National Animal Identification System? Additionally, because many municipalities restrict where and how a chemically euthanized horse can be disposed, is it an option to seek federal tax credits for owners who do euthanize to help offset some of the associated costs? Or can we assist local authorities and establish affordable euthanasia facilities perhaps at auction and sale companies because of their availability? This could provide owners with a readily available, economical way to euthanize a horse.

Association Options

Because enacting legislation is often a lengthy process with strong emotions on all sides of the issue, what are some additional initiatives associations like AQHA – and perhaps the Unwanted Horse Coalition – can enact independently of Congress? At AQHA, we are in the initial stages of developing a program through which any owner of a horse can have a notation placed on the horse's certificate of registration indicating that, should the horse need a retirement home, that owner will take the horse back. The program does not mean any money will change hands, but simply provides an alternative for owners who sell a horse and later want to provide for its well-being.

Additionally, we also are exploring the possibility of establishing an online adoption service where members could list horses that might need a home. The concept attempts to connect adoptable horses with suitable homes.

As previously stated, AQHA – and other equine associations – cannot limit the number or even types of horses being bred. However, we want owners to understand the benefits of spaying and gelding, or neutering. At AQHA, we don't believe every horse should be bred. Sometimes, the key to reducing the numbers of unwanted horse is for owners to not produce horses at all. At AQHA, we do not necessarily advocate breeding *more* horses, but we are advocates of *better* horses, who remain marketable. As a breed registry – and not a supplier of horses – AQHA is trying to do all it can to encourage its members to produce just that – good, well-broke and well-trained horses that can meet market demands.

Creativity

It's been said that creativity and ingenuity can solve almost anything, and when it comes to America's unwanted horses, imaginations really must come into play; we all have to "think outside the box".

To increase attention to the plight of America's wild mustangs, the Mustang Heritage Foundation developed its Extreme Mustang Makeover, where trainers take wild mustangs, train them for use and later adopt the animals out. The unconventional event casts a spotlight on – but more importantly provides homes – for a number of Mustangs that might otherwise be considered unwanted. Additionally, the Mustang Heritage Foundation provides information and education about mustangs and burros to those in attendance. Perhaps a similar program should be explored for breed associations.

An AQHA event designed to showcase the ability of horses that are usable but because of current economic times or lack of proper training might be at risk of winding up as unwanted or unneeded is the Fundamentals of Horsemanship Futurity. This concept, based on AQHA's Fundamentals of Horsemanship curriculum, will bring breeders and trainers together to showcase the talents of and provide a market for trainable young horses. A pilot Fundamentals of Horsemanship Futurity will occur in 2009.

The Kentucky Quarter Horse Association is launching its Quarter Horse Breeders Challenge Sale and Futurity later this year. That event will:

1. Promote quality American Quarter Horses that ride well and have the capability to work.

2. Create an incentive to develop and train all horses in a humane manner, protecting at all times their physical and mental potential.

3. Promote resistance-free training methods resulting in a more efficient horse and to establish a greater market for quality American Quarter Horses

4. Provide an event that is enjoyable to spectators.

5. Provide an event that is beneficial to the horse industry.

Whatever new programs we launch, our creativity can play a vital role in helping America's horses. Our horses do give us their very best – that's what makes horses so special. At the very least, we need to change the way we view horses and horse ownership. If we are going to defend a person's right to own horses, then we must also recognize that with that right comes responsibility.

Banning horse slaughter doesn't address the underlying causes of why horses become unwanted. As an industry we *can* work together, reduce the numbers and create compassionate, workable solutions.

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Questions: What They Are and How to Ask Them

Al Kane
USDA/APHIS/BLM Wild Horse and Burro Partnership
USDA/APHIS/VS/Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health
Fort Collins, CO

See the power point for comments.

Summary

Robin C. Lohnes
American Horse Protection Association, Inc.
Washington, DC

The primary purpose of the Unwanted Horse Forum was to provide an educational platform in which to continue dialogue about the current issues relating to unwanted horses in the United States by framing the problem, exchanging ideas, invoking provocative thought, and posing possible solutions.

Invited speakers addressed the issue from a variety of vantage points, and sparked a thoughtful and deliberate discussion among participants and panelists, as well as the general public and media. Below is a brief synopsis of each speaker's presentation, as well as some general observations, a compilation of possible solutions, and thoughts on next steps.

SPEAKERS

Jay Hickey, President of the American Horse Council, opened the summit with a hearty welcome, thanking its sponsors and speakers. He set the tone by challenging all participants to mobilize their efforts, both collectively and individually to erase the term "unwanted horse" from our vocabulary.

Nat T. Messer IV, DVM, gave a historical overview of the problem, and noted that sometimes the best laid plans do not always accomplish the goal. Citing the Horse Protection Act of 1970 and the Wild, Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 as examples of equine welfare legislative initiatives that have resulted in unintended consequences, Dr. Messer suggested that the proposed legislation to ban equine slaughter in the United States had already begun to adversely impact the horse industry.

Dr. Messer defined the unwanted horse as one that is deemed to be no longer needed or useful or one whose owner is no longer able to provide physical or financial care, and estimated that there were over 100,000 unwanted horses in the United States. He pointed out, however, that there is little or no statistical information relating to the unwanted horse (e.g., demographics, age, sex, etc.) and that better data collection is necessary.

Camie R. Heleski, Ph.D., from Michigan State University, addressed a number of ethical questions surrounding the unwanted horse issue. She pointed out that an individual's moral compass often determines how one views the unwanted horse issue and especially horse slaughter. She also noted that values and perceptions influence one's view, and asked some difficult questions such as is it more acceptable for some horses (e.g., dangerous animals) to go to slaughter than others, and whether a personal decision to send a horse to slaughter is different from one that is made from a business perspective. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that there will always be an ethical responsibility to ensure equine welfare.

David L. Meeker, Ph.D., MBA, from the National Renderers Association, spoke in general about carcass disposal. He stated that carcass disposal is not uniformly regulated but the rendering process is, and suggested that rendering is a better option to alternatives such as composting, burial, landfills and incineration because it employs appropriate safeguards and is more environmentally safe. However, he added that since one of the byproducts is pet food, renderers prefer not to accept animals euthanized by an overdose of barbiturates due to drug residues.

Holly Hazard, from The Humane Society of the United States, focused her comments on the need to educate new and existing horse owners on finding better alternatives for rehoming horses, through retraining not trading, and added that the horse industry needs to move away from the notion that slaughter is a humane solution to the unwanted horse problem. She suggested the industry encourage funding for retraining and educational programs and advocated the creation of a national horse adoption network.

Tom Lenz, DVM, MS, DACT, Chair of the Unwanted Horse Coalition, stated that based on his experience it was not possible to separate the slaughter issue from the unwanted horse issue because the slaughter horse epitomizes the unwanted horse. However, he acknowledged that the industry needs to address the problem of unwanted horses and offered the following solutions: buying rather than breeding; adopting rather than buying; finding alternative careers; and euthanizing rather than discarding.

Professor Karin Bump, from Cazenovia, NY, examined and challenged the facts and fiction surrounding the unwanted horse issue, and suggested the need for real data and common understanding of the problem. She posed several questions. What is the definition of an unwanted horse? How many are there and can they be absorbed into the industry via rescue facilities? How much does it cost and finally, are things getting better or worse for unwanted horses? She also emphasized collaboration rather than fractionalization.

The Honorable Charles Stenholm, former Congressman from Texas, spoke primarily to the federal role with regard to the issue of horse slaughter. He made two points. First, he raised the issue of private property rights, suggesting that it is an individual's right to sell their horse to slaughter if they so choose. Second, he pointed out that if horses are viewed as pets rather than livestock the industry risks the potential loss of federal funding for equine programs.

Tim Cordes, DVM, from USDA/APHIS, gave an overview of the Department's Slaughter Horse Transport Program (SHTP) and stated that although horse processing facilities are no longer open in the United States, the SHTP will remain active. He noted that in an attempt to circumvent regulations an increasing number of horses may move through the system as non-slaughter bound horses, as opposed to slaughter bound horses; however, he added that the new amendment to the transport regulations will begin to address this disparity.

Jennifer Woods, from Alberta, Canada, gave an overview of the Alberta Equine Welfare Group and its recently published The Alberta Horse Welfare Report which highlights Canadian law enforcement regarding the humane treatment of horses processed in Alberta for food. According to Ms. Woods, slaughter bound animals are required to be "fit for transport" and noted that one of the biggest problems she has encountered is the body condition of animals received from farms. She also identified as a potential problem the discrepancies between U.S. and Canadian

transport regulations. While the Alberta Equine Welfare Group believes that processing horses for food is a humane end to a horse's life, she added that guidelines for the humane handling of horses have been recently completed and there is a current proposal to ban the use of double deck trailers for the transport of horses to slaughter.

Lynn Cross spoke about the unwanted horse issue from the perspective of owner and operator of Little Brook Farm, an equine educational center and rescue facility located in Chatham, NY. Ms. Cross acknowledged that there are more horses than available homes but believes it is her responsibility to provide for horses throughout their life and ensure them a dignified death through euthanasia rather than sending them to slaughter which she views as equine cruelty. Addressing irresponsible breeding, she suggested as one possible solution an additional fee for each breeding and registration that would be earmarked for rescues, sanctuaries and the euthanasia of unwanted horses.

Tom Persechino, Marketing Director for the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), began his remarks with the statement that all horses and all owners are not created equal, and that each horse and owner has its own unique set of circumstances. He categorized horses as either usable (healthy, suitable for rehoming, etc.) or unusable (in poor health, ill, dangerous, etc.). Advocating owner responsibility, Mr. Persechino offered a number of alternatives for usable horses such as rescue facilities, handicapped riding programs, college/university equine programs or new careers, and for unusable horses, options such as euthanasia or veterinary equine research programs. He added that AQHA is exploring ways to address the problem of unwanted horses within its own breed association.

The final speaker, Al Kane, DVM, with USDA/APHIS, pointed out that while it is now politically correct to talk about the unwanted horse issue, there needs to be a better understanding of the problems the industry is facing. Dr. Kane emphasized how important it is to collect data through descriptive surveys followed by comparative studies, and mentioned ongoing studies at CSU and UC Davis.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

A number of general observations emerged as the forum drew to a close. First and foremost, the speakers successfully presented a myriad of perspectives from which ideas were exchanged and possible solutions were posed. Moreover, it invoked provocative thought as speakers tried to embrace and frame the unwanted horse issue. While there appeared to be more commonality than discord, it is important to highlight some of the difference observed in order to ensure that stakeholders are not inadvertently working at cross purposes.

Although all of the speakers addressed the subject of the unwanted horse, it is interesting to note that there seemed to be a difference in the definition of the unwanted horse from speaker to speaker. Some defined the unwanted horse as one bound for slaughter either by choice or by chance. Others defined the unwanted horse as unusable. Yet others defined it as one that simply has no place to go. Although this phenomenon is not surprising, given the varied perspectives of the speakers, a uniformly accepted definition (even if it is the compilation of all of the above)

might be something to address in future dialogue in order to ensure that all stakeholders are in sync.

Another area of disparity was how the speakers framed their presentations with regard to the issue of slaughter. There seemed to be a difference of opinion as to whether one could separate the slaughter issue from the unwanted horse issue. This also may be an area to further explore since the slaughter issue often becomes quickly polarized which in turn has the potential to hinder the ability to effectively address and identify possible solutions for the unwanted horse issue. Additionally, the debate on how horses are classified (livestock vs. companion) may also be a potential factor as it relates to the overall discussion of the unwanted horse.

There also seemed to be a difference in opinion as to what “euthanasia” actually means and, more importantly, a difference in interpretation and acceptance as to the three AVMA approved methods of euthanasia. Some felt that any of the three methods is acceptable while others clearly stated that euthanasia by captive bolt (which is used in processing plants) is cruel and inhumane and therefore not acceptable. This, too, may be an area for stakeholders to further explore as the discussion on unwanted horses continues.

All differences aside, the forum sparked a really good, broad-based discussion of the challenges the industry faces concerning unwanted horses. Throughout the day many questions were raised, and although there were not a lot of decisive answers, it did confirm, as many of the presenters pointed out, the need for additional data and research.

Also, in order to continue to move forward it is necessary to have a collaborative effort among all of the stakeholders including Congress and regulators. As in most collaborative efforts, in order to be as productive as possible, it is important to avoid working at cross purposes through duplicative efforts, ownership issues and/or competitive funding ventures. Pausing to take stock and devoting time to discussing the process may help to streamlining such efforts.

A final observation is to keep in mind that it is not enough to focus just on the current situation (an estimated 100,000 – 120,000 unwanted horses) but to also address how to keep that number from increasing or, better yet, reduce the number in years to come. Strategic planning may be helpful in achieving that goal.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Through the course of the day, many of the speakers offered a number of innovative ways to address the unwanted horse issue. Although not inclusive, the following list is a summary of possible solutions:

1. Education of new and existing horse owners on responsible ownership;

2. Buy rather than breed/adopt rather than buy;

3. Seek alternative careers (retrain not trade);

4. Education regarding euthanasia for both owners and the veterinary community;

5. Clearinghouse for data and research involving the unwanted horse issue;

6. Oversight of equine rescue facilities/possible mentor program;

7. Identify potential funding solutions for rescue facilities;

8. Explore concept of publicly funded equine shelters and/or other new venues for rehoming horses;

9. Offer tax credits for owners who choose to euthanize their horses;

10. Encourage responsible breeding through breed association initiatives;

11. Offer an option on registration papers to indicate that a horse be returned to its recorded owner if deemed unwanted;

12. Address discrepancies between U.S. and Canadian transport regulations; and

13. Follow Canada's lead and draft guidelines for the humane handling of horses.

NEXT STEPS

While this forum addressed many of the stated goals of its co-sponsors (the American Horse Council and the Department of Agriculture), it is arguably just one of the many steps necessary to address the unwanted horse issue and goes hand in hand with other efforts such as the Unwanted Horse Coalition. In order to ensure that a productive dialogue continues, the following goals and objectives are offered for consideration:

1. Commit to a collaborative effort on areas of agreement;

2. Continue dialogue on areas of disagreement and work through philosophical, emotional and politically charged differences;

3. Be proactive, not reactive;

4. Strive to be in sync as to definitions, interpretations, expectations, etc.;

5. Create data collection and funding protocols;

6. Continue to work on humane transport laws and regulations; and

7. Consider commissioning a comparable report to The Alberta Horse Welfare Report.

In his opening remarks, Jay Hickey challenged participants to mobilize their efforts, both collectively and individually to erase the term “unwanted horse” from our vocabulary. By marrying the passion and the pragmatic, the industry and its leaders can achieve just that.

APPENDIX A

Speaker Contact Information

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8:00 - 8:05 **Announcements**
Richard Reynnells

8:05 - 8:15 **Welcome**
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8:15 - 8:45 **Historical Perspective**
Nat T. Messer IV, DVM, Dip. ABVP
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University of Missouri
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8:45 - 9:15 **Ethical Perspective**
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9:15 - 9:30 **BREAK**

9:30 - 11:15 **Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues**

9:30 - 9:50 **Carcass Disposal Options**
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9:50 - 10:10 **Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction**
Holly Hazard, CIO
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10:10 - 10:30 **Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction**
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American Association of Equine Practitioners
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Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction
Karin Bump, Professor
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Discussion

11:15 - 12:00 **Panel: What is the Federal Role in Creating Viable Solutions to the Unwanted Horse Issue**

11:15 - 11:30 Congressman Ed Whitfield
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James Robertson: James.robertson@mail.house.gov

11:30 - 11:45 Congressman Charles W. Stenholm
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Washington, DC 20036-2220
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11:45 - 12:00 Discussion

12:00 - 1:00 **LUNCH**

Moderator: Ray Stricklin, Professor
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1:00 - 2:00 **Panel: Transportation Issues: Knowns and Unknowns**

1:00 - 1:20 **Tim Cordes**, Senior Staff Veterinarian
National Coordinator for Equine Programs
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4700 River Road, Unit 46
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1:20 - 1:40 **Jennifer Woods,** B. Sc. Animal Science
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1:40 - 2:00 Q&A

2:00 - 2:15 **BREAK**

2:15 - 3:45 **Panel: Potential Solutions and Options**

2:15 - 2:45 **Lynn Cross**
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Educational Center and Sanctuary
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2:45 - 3:15 **Tom Persechino**, Senior Director of Marketing
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3:15 - 3:45 **Al Kane**
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3:45 - 4:00 Wrap Up
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APPENDIX B

Power Point Slides

Ethical Perspectives on the Unwanted Horse Issue & the US Ban on Equine Slaughter, Camie R. Heleski 67

Panel: Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction

Carcass Disposal Options, David L. Meeker 71

The "Unwanted" Horse in the U.S.: An Overview of the Issue, Tom Lenz 78

The Need for Real Data and Common Understandings, Karin Bump 82

Panel: Commercial Transportation of Horses to Slaughter in the United States: Knowns and Unknowns

The Alberta Horse Report, Jennifer Woods 87

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

Potential Solutions and Options--Little Brook Farms Provides Humane Alternatives for the Unwanted Horse, Lynn Cross 91

Potential Solutions and Options, Tom Persechino 96

Unwanted Horse Questions: What They Are and How to Ask Them, Al Kane 102

Ethical Perspectives on the Unwanted Horse Issue & the US Ban on Equine Slaughter

Camie R. Heleski
Department of Animal Science
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Ethical Perspectives on the Unwanted Horse Issue & the US Ban on Equine Slaughter

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Coordinator, Michigan State University Horse Management Program
Research Interests: Horse Behavior & Welfare; Horse-Human Interaction

Questions to be asked that have an ethical component…

- Does the US ban on equine slaughter play a role in the current scenario of too many unwanted horses?
- How have peoples' values & perceptions of the horse influenced the slaughter debate?
- Is it possible that it's more acceptable to slaughter some horses than others?
- How much responsibility should each owner take for the lifetime commitment to horse ownership?
- How much responsibility should each breeder have toward ensuring a long term home for each foal?

- Can retirement homes, rescue centers, therapeutic riding centers, mounted police units etc. house all of the unwanted horses?
- In the case of dangerous horses, do we have a greater ethical responsibility to people who might encounter them (perhaps unknowingly) or to the horses themselves?
- Should we separate the issues of: humane transportation, humane methods of ending a horse's life, and whether or not it's ok to slaughter horses period? Is it possible that we might consider it ok to slaughter horses for consumption by zoo animals but not for human consumption?

- Even if we conclude that we're "anti-slaughter", is it possible there are worse scenarios currently playing out for unwanted horses?
- Is it fair to impose the value systems of some onto all?
- Have we done the unwanted horse any favors by banning US slaughter?
- Could things get still worse for unwanted horses?

This issue has been a controversial one for me for > 30 years…

- Tremendous deal of thought behind my perspectives.
- I have gone to great lengths to study horse behavior, animal welfare science, and bioethics in addressing the issue.
- Because of my ambivalent feelings toward the issue, I did not weigh in very strongly one way or the other when the issue was being debated…and now I regret that…

- When asked my opinion, I'd say I wasn't overly concerned with the actual slaughter at regulated plants, but I *was* concerned with treatment of horses collected at multiple sites & the time in transport.
- But, we are now at a worse place in terms of overall horse welfare; the collective suffering of horses is greater than it has been in many decades.
- One aspect of ethical analysis…is cost-benefit analysis.

An Ethics Primer

- One does not need high level philosophy to grasp a basic understanding of ethics.
- Ethics basically = morals
- Most (but clearly not all) people have an intuitive sense of good ethics.
- People's ethics (and attached values) play heavily into the decisions made by stakeholders & policy makers.

- Simply put, ethics refers to the rightness or wrongness of actions (CAST 2005)
- The law is not always a sufficient guideline.
- Some people guide their "moral compass" on legislation, others by culture/customs, others on religion.
  - Many religions conflict with one another about what is ethically appropriate (e.g. Hindus believe it is ethically wrong to eat cattle, but > 90% of Americans eat beef)
- Part of ethics is the study of arguments – premises, conclusions & validity.

A Spectrum (varying degrees between these 3) (from excerpts in CAST 2005)

- Dominionists – believe that we may do whatever we please to animals; animals have value only as means to human ends
- Welfarists – believe that animals are sentient and humans are their stewards; they wish to achieve a balance between humans' and animals' benefits & harms
- Rightists – believe that animals have basic moral rights & therefore cannot be treated as mere means to others' ends

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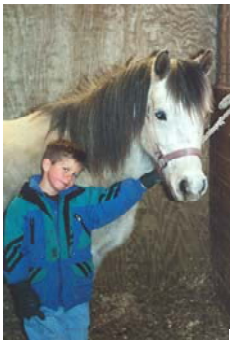
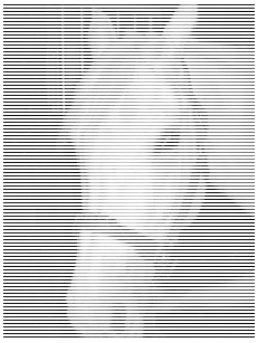
How have peoples' values & perceptions of the horse influenced the slaughter debate?

- A beloved cultural icon in the US (Kellert, 1980; 1 of the top 3 most beloved animals)
- Symbol of beauty, grace, power
- Has complicated the issue regarding end-of life issues for horses.
- Horse industry personnel typically classify the horse as "livestock"; public - as "companion animals"

Is it possible that it's more acceptable to slaughter some horses than others?

- Difficult concept for those who like to see the world in "black and white"
- Many don't like to believe that values, perceptions & ethics play a role in decision-making…but they do.
- Why does it feel so different to send a 20 year old brood mare/show horse to slaughter versus a 5 year old who has shown a propensity to being truly dangerous?
  - Implications of a social contract





How much responsibility should each owner take for the lifetime commitment to horse ownership?
How much responsibility should each breeder have toward ensuring a long term home for each foal?

- Others in the program will be discussing, but these 2 issues need to be considered more heavily (examples of responsible dog breeder programs that have evolved)

Some of the rarer breeds of dogs have set good examples (e.g. Flat coated retriever)…

- **Sample Requirements for Breeders**
- All dogs that are bred must have hip & eye clearance.
- Puppies or dogs that are placed as pets must be sold with AKC limited registration, or spay/neuter contracts.
- Breeder agrees to take back any dog that needs to be re-homed (or assist with the process).
- Each buyer is rigorously screened.
- http://clubs.akc.org/fcra/coe.html

In the case of dangerous horses, do we have a greater ethical responsibility to the people who might encounter them (perhaps unknowingly) or to the horses themselves?

- Let's say Josey Smith runs a riding stable. She makes a marginal living at this. From time to time, her horse supplier brings her a horse that proves to be truly dangerous…is it ethical for her to pawn this off on someone else? Is it realistic for someone just barely making a living to spend the $ on euthanasia & burial?

Even if we conclude that we're "anti-slaughter", is it possible there are worse options currently taking place?

Horses are beautiful & we don't consume them in the US so they shouldn't be slaughtered.

I could never do it to my horse, so I don't want anyone else to do it to their horse.

Horses suffering because owners can't afford them & have no reasonable way to get rid of them.

Dangerous horses no longer being sent to slaughter; rather being pawned off on the unsuspecting.

Horses suffering because trailer trips are longer; more mixing taking place; regulations in Mexican plants are not as tightly regulated.

Conclusion

- Decision making is not value-free.
- However, decisions should be made with careful analysis; outcomes should be weighed
- “Gut” reactions are important, but still need to be assessed
- Facts: there are too many unwanted horses; economic times are tough; options are very limited for what to do with unwanted horses
- Let your conscience help guide you with where we go from here…

Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

Carcass Disposal Options

David L. Meeker
National Renderers Association
Alexandria, VA

Carcass Disposal Options

David L. Meeker, Ph.D., MBA
Vice President, Scientific Services
National Renderers Association

Representation

National Renderers Association (NRA)

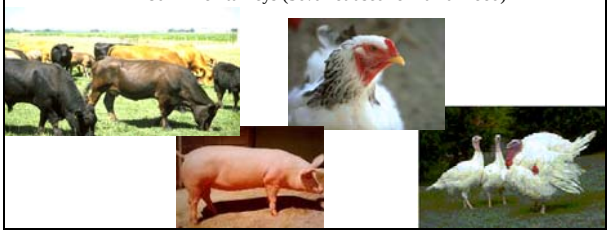
NRA is the international trade association for the industry that recycles animal agriculture by-products into valuable ingredients for the livestock, pet food, chemical and cosmetics industries.

The Rendering Industry (U.S. and Canada)

- 246 Facilities
- $3 billion annual revenue
- 54 billion lb. raw material each year
- 150 million lb. raw material each day

US Animal Agriculture Annual Production

- 35 million cattle (50% not used for human food)
- 100 million hogs (42% not used for human food)
- 8 billion chickens (37% not used for human food)
- 280 million turkeys (36% not used for human food)



Raw Materials

- Offal
- Bones and fat
- Blood
- Animals dead on arrival, in transit or on farms
- Restaurant grease
- Feathers

NRA Member Independent Rendering Facilities

Summary

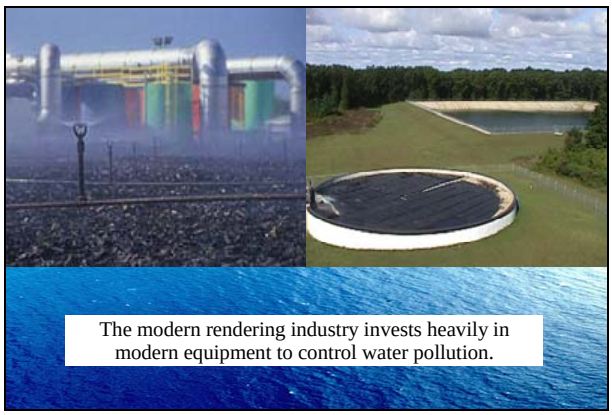
Rendering is Cooking and Drying.

Rendering is Recycling.

Rendering is Essential to Public Health.

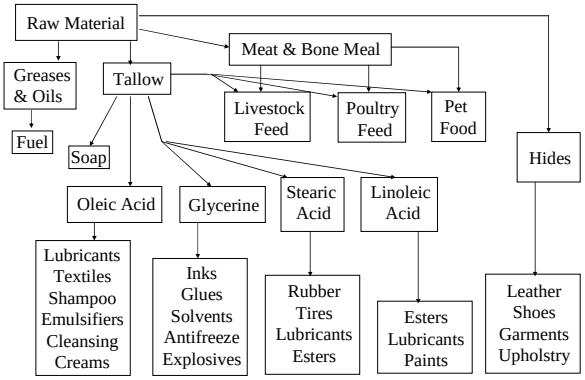
Rendering is Cooking and Drying

- Continuous flow
- Steam cookers
- 245º to 290º F. for 40 to 90 minutes
- Inactivation of bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and parasitic organisms.



The industry converts more than 54 billion pounds of animal by-products into usable commodities annually.

- Highly valued protein supplements for livestock, poultry, pets
- Tallow for the manufacture of fatty acids and as a source of energy in feed rations.



Examples of a Few Finished Products

"Fallen" Animals (Died On Farms)

1.71 million adult cattle/yr.
2.37 million calves/yr.
18 million swine/yr.
350 million lb. poultry/yr.

Total = 4.4 billion lb./yr.
Approx. 2.2 billion lb./yr. (50%) is rendered.
Approx. 4.5% of rendered products come from fallen animals.

(USDA data for 2002)

Without renderers…...

Assurance of Quality

Basic elements of sanitation and hygiene

- Good manufacturing practices (GMPs)
- Hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP)
- APPI Code of Practice

The US Rendering Industry Is Regulated

- Permitted & licensed by State Agencies
- Inspected
  - Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
  - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of USDA

Rendering is Essential to Public Health by Disposing of Dead Stock.

- Preferred disposal method
  - environmentally responsible
  - timely removal and reduction/separation
  - reduces risk to public health
  - control of rodents, insects and scavengers
- Time – temperature processes of rendering (245º F – 290º F for 40 to 90 minutes) inactivate bacteria, viruses, and other disease causing agents.

Rendering for Dead Stock Disposal

- Rendering abides by State laws regarding dead stock" disposal.
  - Usually 24 or 48 hrs. after death to avoid the nuisances of odors and potential transmission of disease.
- Dead stock picked up by designated, specially equipped trucks to preclude contamination of the roadways.
- Trucks cleaned and disinfected after routes.
- Trucks subject to inspection, authorized by law.
- Facilities are licensed and approved.
  - Government's ability to monitor and regulate is vital.

Alternative Methods for Dead Stock Disposal

- Landfills
- Composting
- Burial
- Burning
- Incineration

Known disadvantages associated with each

Landfills for Dead Stock Disposal

- Amendments such as sawdust must be added, increasing volume.
- Decomposition proceeds slowly and at relatively low temperatures.
- Contributes to methane gas production and odors.
- Disease can be spread to by rats, cats, dogs, birds, flies, etc.

Composting for Dead Stock Disposal

- Labor and management intensive.
- If done improperly, risk to the environment and health.
- Composting process includes proper (C:N ratio, moisture content, particle size, oxygen concentration, temperature.

Improper Composting

Improper Composting

Burial for Dead Stock Disposal

- Some areas have high water table.
- Some areas have insufficient space.
- Some areas have only thin layer of soil over solid rock
- Danger of carcasses contaminating water supplies.

Rendering is a Better Option

Burning for Dead Stock Disposal

- Significant risks to human, livestock and environmental health.
- Environmental regulations prevent.

Rendering is a Better Option

Incineration for Dead Stock Disposal

- Biologically safe if done properly.
- Cattle to be cut into smaller pieces prior to incineration.
- Significant fuel costs (diesel, natural gas, or propane).
- Significant capital costs.
- Typically does not comply with air quality standards.
- Inadequate capacity in U.S. to replace rendering.

Rendering is a Better Option

Rough Scoring of Disposal Options Against Hazards

Potential Public Health Hazards	Disposal Options				
	Rendering	Incineration	Landfill	Pyre	Burial
Cryptosporidium					
BSE*					
Sulphur Dioxide					
Particulates					
E. coli, Campylobacter					
Rank by Lowest Risk	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Risk is non-existent or negligible

Risk is intermediate

Risk is greatest for human exposure

* For cattle over 30 months only, the "blank" cell for rendering is dependent on solids going for incineration

UK Department of Health, *A Rapid Qualitative Assessment of possible risks to Public Health from current Foot & Mouth Disposal Options*, June 2001

Rendering the Best Option

Rendering is Recycling

- Renderers process roughly 50% of all livestock mortalities - approximately 2.2 billion pounds annually.
- Beef cattle account for the largest proportion by weight.
- The rendering option remains highly cost effective.

Cost Considerations

- Cost has already limited pick-up service in some areas.
  - Some producers may consider alternatives to avoid charges.
    - Hazards and risks increase.
      - Environmental degradation
      - Disease outbreaks in animals or humans
    - May be illegal.

Rendering is the Best Option

Survey of Renderers Accepting Horses

❖Do you take still horse carcasses at your plants?
- Companies owning approximately 25 plants answered yes

❖How much do you charge to take horse carcasses?
- Current charges range from $40 t0 $250
- Depends on distance, market, and volume
- Some allow dead horses to be dropped off
- Some companies don't share this data

Survey of Renderers Accepting Horses

❖Do you require the horse to be dead before your employee handles the carcass?
- Some renderers require the animals to be dead before calling the service

❖Do you provide euthanasia service?
- Some renderers will euthanize horses

Survey of Renderers Accepting Horses

❖Do you have any restrictions on the use of sodium phenobarbital by veterinarians for euthanizing horses you pick up?
- Some renderers will not accept animals treated with sodium phenobarbital
- Renderers prefer that sodium phenobarbital not be used
  - Pet food companies restrictions
- Sodium Phenobarbital at very low, diluted levels is not a risk to livestock.

Survey of Renderers Accepting Horses

❖Have you seen an increase in horse carcasses you pick up in recent months?
- Most have seen only small increases
- Plants near Nevada have seen significant increases.

Thank You

More Information:

http://nationalrenderers.org

Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

Unwanted Horses: Fact or Fiction

Tom Lenz
Unwanted Horse Coalition
Louisburg, KS

The "Unwanted" Horse in the U.S.
Fact or Fiction

Tom R. Lenz, DVM, MS, DACT
26760 State Line Road
Louisburg, Kansas 66053

What Started the "Unwanted" Horse Discussion?

- There have always been unwanted horses
- Events that brought it to our attention
  - 2001-Foot & Mouth disease epidemic in Europe
  - Increased demand for horse meat in Europe
  - Drew media attention to the horse processing plants in the U.S.
  - Stimulated the introduction of federal legislation to ban horse slaughter
  - Fostered realization in U.S. horse industry there was an "unwanted" horse issue

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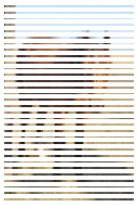
What is an "Unwanted" Horse?

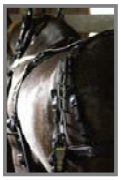
- Phrase 1st coined by AAEP
- "Horses which are no longer wanted by their current owner because they are old, injured, sick, unmanageable, or fail to meet their owner's expectations."*



*As defined by the Unwanted Horse Coalition-2005

Demographics of the "Unwanted" Horse

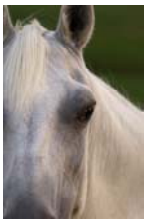
- Generalizations
  - Horses that are old
  - Horses that are incurably lame
  - Horses with behavioral problems
  - Horses that are dangerous
  - Un-adoptable feral horses
  - Horses that fail to meet owner's expectations
    - Unattractive
    - Not athletic
    - Unmarketable
    - Wrong color (no color)
    - Cost too much to care for
  - Normal, healthy horses of various ages and breeds



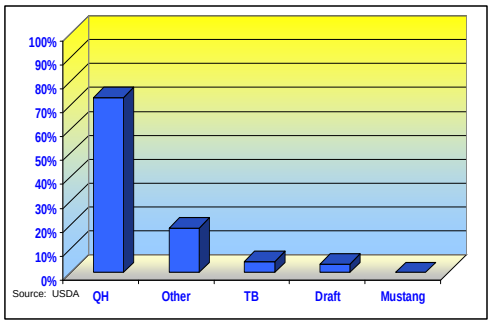
Demographics of the "Unwanted" Horse

Initial Unknowns:

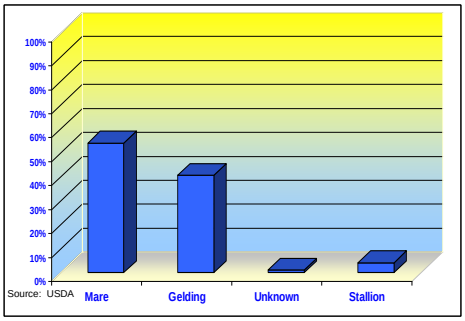
- What breeds are represented?
- Is there a sex predilection?
- What's their age?
- How many are purebred vs. grade?
- What was their most recent occupation?
- What was their value?
- What is their current value?
- Do they become neglected, abused, or processed for meat?
- Who is responsible for producing them?



Breed/Type of Horses Processed in U.S.
2001 — 2005
(USDA, Veterinary Services)



Gender of Horses Processed in U.S.
2002 — 2005
(USDA, Veterinary Services)

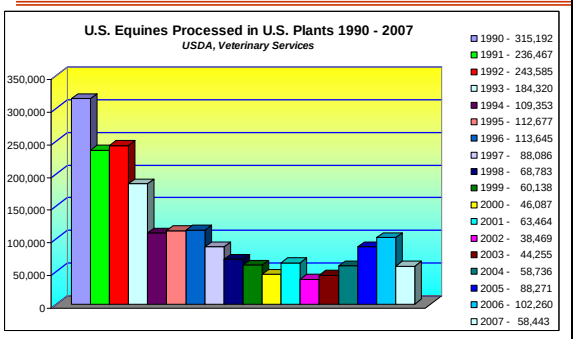


How Many "Unwanted" Horses are There? (2007)

- ± 58,000 processed in U.S.
- ± 35,000 horses exported to Canada for processing
- ± 45,000 horses exported to Mexico for processing
- ± 21,000 un-adoptable feral horses kept in BLM sanctuaries
- ± 9,000 feral horses in BLM adoption pipeline.
  - ± 7-8,000 gathered each year
  - ± 5-6,000 adopted
- Others-abandoned/neglected/abused???

TOTAL > ±170,000 "Unwanted" horses <u>each year</u>

Trends in U.S. Horses Processed for Meat



Why the Decrease in the Number of Horses Processed?

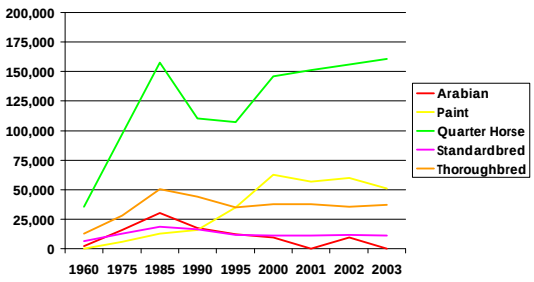
Fact: 80% decrease in the number of unwanted horses sent to processing plants after 1990.

Why the decrease?

- Absorbed by the industry?
  - Alternative careers, rescue/retirement?
- Changes in IRS Tax code in mid-1980's?
- Changing market demands?
- Decreased production?
- Surplus reduction?
  - Processed for meat?

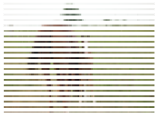
Breed Registration Trends

(2006 Horse Industry Directory)



Wanted vs. Unwanted Horse Value

- Wanted
  - American Quarter Horse Value*
    - Average - $6,840 / head
  - Colorado Horse Value **
    - Average - $2,653 / head
- Unwanted
  - Monthly Horse Sale - Bonner Springs, KS (19 May 08)
    - Horses in good flesh - $250-300
    - Yearlings - $50-100
  - Monthly Horse Sale - Corsica, S.D. (21 April 08)
    - Top 15 ranch geldings - $3060 / head
    - Ranch Broodmare Dispersal - $333 / mare
    - 62 thin horses including yearlings - $50 or less
  - Weekly Livestock Sale – Ft. Collins, CO (14 May 08)
    - Average - $270 / head



*American Quarter Horse Association – 5/1/2008
**Colorado Agriculture Statistics Service – 9/30/1999

The AAEP Believes the "Unwanted" Horse is at the Heart of the Slaughter Issue

Hosted "Unwanted" Horse Summit

- April 19, 2005, in conjunction with American Horse Council meeting in Washington, D.C.
- Participants from breed groups, veterinary organizations, sport/discipline groups, welfare/humane groups & rescue/retirements

- Is there an unwanted horse problem?
- If so, what can the industry do to address it?

Summit Conclusions

- There is an Unwanted Horse issue in the U.S.
- Current rescue/retirement facilities unable to accommodate large numbers of horses
- Entire industry must take responsibility & act
- Large funding source is not available
- Need for pre-ownership education
- Responsible ownership is key!!!!

Unwanted Horse Coalition Formed

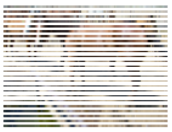
- <u>Mission Statement</u>
  - "To reduce the number of unwanted horses and improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety, and responsible care of the horse"
- Under the umbrella of the AHC
- Financially supported by participating organizations
- Focused on education, communication & responsible ownership

Unwanted Horse Coalition Membership

- American Association of Equine Practitioners
- American Paint Horse Association
- American Quarter Horse Association
- American Veterinary Medical Association
- California Thoroughbred Breeders Association
- The Jockey Club
- Maryland Horse Breeders
- Masters of Foxhounds Assn. of America
- Mustang Heritage Foundation
- Minnesota Horse Council
- National HBPA, Inc.
- National Thoroughbred Racing Association
- Oak Tree Racing Association
- AHC State Horse Council
- Pinto Horse Association of America
- Primedia Equine Network
- Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association
- Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association
- U.S. Dressage Federation
- U.S. Equestrian Federation
- U.S. Polo Association
- U.S. Trotting Association

Colorado Unwanted Horse Environmental Assessment Study*

- Conducted February – April, 2008
- Website Survey – 2857 respondents
- Stakeholder Report – 10 focus groups
- Is there an unwanted horse problem?
  - 92% - Yes
- How do you know?
  - 63% - personal observation
- Why the increase?
  - Closure of U.S. processing plants
  - Worsening economic conditions
  - Limited options for horse euthanasia



*Funded by Animal Assistance Foundation

Colorado Unwanted Horse Environmental Assessment Study

- What horses are unwanted?
  - Old
  - Injured
  - Fail to meet owner's expectations
- Why do they become unwanted?
  - Horse care too expensive
  - Horse's poor health
  - Loss of interest (fun wears off)
- Proposed solutions
  - Educate new owners
  - Provide resources for cost effective euthanasia
  - Increase capacity & develop licensure for horse rescues

Recent News Headlines

- "Hungry, Hungry Horses"
  - *Source: Lexington Herald-Leader-2 March 2008*
- "Leaner Pastures: As Horses Multiply, Neglect Cases Rise"
  - *Source: Wall Street Journal-7 January 2008*
- "Horses Seized From Another Colorado Rescue"
  - *The Horse Magazine – 23 January 2008*
- "An Epidemic of Abandoned Horses"
  - *Source: Time Magazine – 28 May 2008*
- "Unwanted Horses Increasing"
  - *KOMU-TV – Columbia, MO – 21 April 08*
- www.avma.org/issues/animal welfare/unwanted horses news articles.asp
  - *114 Articles since March 2007*

Conclusions

- There is an "Unwanted Horse" issue in the U.S.
- We cannot completely eliminate the "unwanted horses" issue
- We cannot prevent:
  - Horses aging
  - All Injuries
  - Poor athletes
  - Unattractive horses
- We can minimize it
  - Buy rather than breed
  - Adopt rather than buy
  - Find alternative careers
  - Euthanize rather than discard

Panel: Unwanted Horse Issues

Unwanted Horse: Fact or Fiction?
The need for real data and common understandings.

Karin D. Bump
Cazenovia College
Cazenovia, NY

The Unwanted Horse
Fact or Fiction?

The need for real data
and common understandings

Professor Karin Bump
Cazenovia College, Cazenovia NY

"The World
is not
the way they tell you it is"

Adam Smith (psyu)

- Five areas of 'fact or fiction'

1.Unwanted horses are actually unwanted

- Definitions
  - Physically or mentally unsound
  - No longer suitable for work
  - No longer financially feasible to keep, economic duress of owner
- Definitions are similar.
- Emphasis on aspects of definitions differ.

"Regardless of the reason, these horses no longer have 'permanent' homes" (AVMA)

So are unwanted horses actually unwanted?

2. We know how many 'unwanted horses' there are.

- Fiction
- How do we count this population of horses?
  - Number that would have gone to slaughter facilities in the US if it was an option?
  - Number that cross the boarders?
  - Horses in rescue and adoption facilities?

How would we count the transient horse population?

- Currently no national organization, accrediting agency or central clearinghouse
- American Horse Defense Fund, Unwanted Horse Coalition, Humane Society of the United States
- Others…

How many unwanted horses?

- Real data is needed
  - Equine Science Society
  - American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists
  - National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics
  - American Farm Bureau Federation.

3. Unwanted horses can be absorbed into the industry through rescue facilities & other placement organizations

- Faction
- "It is rare that a population of any kind cannot absorb such a small increase in supply and demand" (Holland)
- AAEP suggests that 2700 facilities would be needed the first year of a full slaughter ban and the need for 2700 more the second year…

An area of potential agreement?

- Real benefit in gathering data on:
  - Number of rescue and retirement organizations in existence
  - Number of horses currently under transient care
  - Current capacity of existing organizations
  - Stability of existing organizations

Central Organizing Body

4. We know how much it costs to care for the 'unwanted' horse population

- Animal Welfare Council - $220 million each year
- Congressman Goodlatte - $530 million a year by 2016
- Unwanted horse Coalition - $1,800-$2,400 per horse annually
- AAEP - $5 per day for average daily care

Do we know the cost?

- Whether it is a yearly number or a daily number, a fixed percentage or a fixed number, someone will have to budget for these horses and money will have to come from somewhere to cover the expenses.
- The charity model isn't working.

- Create and fund sanctuaries for unwanted, neglected and abused horses, donkeys and mules in the US for 6 months
- Price: **$2,500,000,000.00**
- Achieve Universal Literacy
- Price: **$5,000,000,000.00**
- Cure a Deadly Disease
- Price: **$1,500,000.00**

5. Things are getting better/Things are getting worse for unwanted horses

- More calls are coming in to rescue facilities
  - "You can find a home for these horses… most people do" Chris Heyde with Animal Welfare Institute (Dorell).
- More calls are coming in to rescue facilities
  - Facilities are saying they can not take in all the horses or if they do they are stretched beyond their capabilities (Dorell, Sandberg, Thomas, Prada, Denver News).

News Coverage….

- Wall Street Journal
- Time Magazine
- USA Today
- HBO Real Sports with Bryant Gumbell
- NPR National News

It doesn't sound like it is getting better.

Fact or Fiction?

- We will move forward together as an Industry.

"Change can come, but it will only come as a result of a unified effort… We horseman are mostly independent minded competitive people who like to do our own thing. Therefore, the idea of unity may seem alien or objectionable to many of us…[but] United we stand, divided we fall" (Bob Whiteley)

Unified effort at gathering data

- Could we agree upon a single organization as a point for data gathering?
- Gather data on:
  - Current organizations and resources
  - Cost of care
  - Types and conditions of entering horses
    - **Age, sex, breed, mental and physical soundness, body condition, perceived usability, length of time to adoption**
  - Cost/benefit ratio

All of us can be part of solutions

- Collaboration
- Participation

NYS Task Force on Retired Racehorses

- Goal – to find new careers for racehorses coming off the tracks.
- Two categories – Sound and Unsound
- Untapped potential for human therapeutic uses
- Potential new markets for agribusiness
- Survey of NY racing industry

- Did you retire any race horses last year
- For what reasons
- To what locations did you retire them/what kind of arrangements were made
- How many were sound, unsound
- Age and sex of each- tied to sound and unsound and arrangements of where they went and reasons for retirement
- Do they perceive there are buyers for the retired horses - and if so, what kinds of horses have more buyers
- What network do they use to place horses

- Would they (and have they) taken back horses they bred when they retired
- Would they pay to retire a horse - and if so under what conditions and how much would they pay
- Would they support a voluntary (or mandatory) payment fund to support retirement programs (funding from registration fees, racing fees, attached to purses, etc.)
- What class did the horse run its last race in prior to retiring
- What were the earnings of the horse prior to retiring

But the world is not the way they tell you it is….

Knowledge is the gathering of facts,

Wisdom is knowing what to do with the facts.

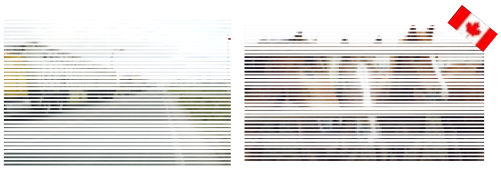
(Chinese proverb)

Panel: Transportation Issues: Knowns and Unknowns

Executive Summary: The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

Jennifer Woods
J. Woods Livestock Services
Alberta, Canada

The Transport of Horses…. The Canadian Perspective



Unwanted Horse Forum, Washington DC 6/2008
J. Woods Livestock Services
Jennifer Woods, B.Sc. Animal Science

Laws and Regulations of Transport of Animals

Canada has laws and codes of practice regulating the transport of all livestock including horses - both federally and provincially.

Cruelty to Animals – Criminal Code

Federal Health of Animals – Transport of Animals

- ✓Protects animals from undue suffering during loading and transport
- ✓Prohibits transport of an animal – infirmity, illness, fatigue, injury
- ✓Requires animals to be fit for transport
- ✓Compromised Animal Policy
- ✓Changes propose to ban double deckers which the industry in Canada strongly supports.

Federal Health of Animals – Importation of horses to meat plant

All US horses bound for slaughter in Canada are inspected by CFIA. The primary purpose of inspection is to verify transport conditions and fitness for travel.

- ✓ USDA vet health certificate
- ✓ Border inspection by CFIA. Load sealed. CFIA verifies transport conditions
- ✓ Licensed to deliver to designated federally registered plant
- ✓ Horses must be transported on single deck trailer
- ✓ Driver must proceed directly to plant
- ✓ CFIA at plant to open seal and inspect horses
- ✓ Horses must be killed within 4 days

Federal Health of Animals – Importation of feeders and riders

- ✓ Negative EIA test
- ✓ Health certificate from a veterinarian including statement of fitness for transport
- ✓ Canada Border Services Agency – EIA, GST

- ✓ CFIA does not inspect - unless there is a complaint made or the horses arrive at the border in double deck trailers:
  - US Horses imported for purposes other than slaughter
  - Interprovincially transported horses
  - Horses in double deck trailers can be turned back for non-compliant humane reasons.

USDA and CFIA have a shared enforcement agreement for horses bound for slaughter.

- ✓ **The owner shipper certificates for all imported non-compliant loads are sent to USDA for required enforcement action.**
- ✓ **As of Dec. 21/07 non-compliant loads in double deck (for humane reasons) are turned back and the USDA is now notified.**
- ✓ **Time in Transit does not mesh up. The US has the 28 hour law which limits the transport of animals to 28 hours. In Canada, monogastrics (eg. horses, pigs), are allowed 36 hours of transportation time. The clock starts over at the border.**
- ✓ **Need conformity in the allowance of double deck trailers.**

Provincial Laws - Animal Protection Acts

For livestock protection and humane handling, Canada and the US are very different.

Alberta - Animal Protection Act (livestock included, not exempt) *"no person shall cause or permit an animal to be or to continue to be in distress."*

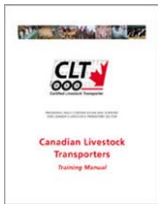
- Fines up to $20,000, including prohibition of ownership
- Includes humane transport and auction market inspection.
- 8 SPCA constables in Alberta
- RCMP

VERY Proactive in Humane Transport :

Laws,

Recommended Codes of Practice

and Industry Initiatives



Fitness to transport is the biggest welfare issue in the transport of horses……

And it starts back on farm!

Fitness of Transport is affected by:

a) Health Status

b) Injury

c) Body Condition Score

d) Pregnancy

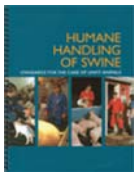
e) Aggressive behavior

f) Age

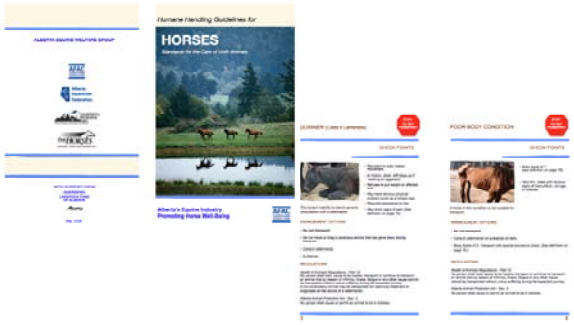
Unfit Guidelines:

CFIA

Alberta



Brand New - :



The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

- ✓ **Spearheaded by the Alberta Equine Welfare Groups (AEWG)**
- ✓ **Formed in 2006 with a broad representation of the horses industry including horse industry groups, veterinarian association, enforcement, government, meat processors, feedlot owners and buyers.**
- ✓ **Overall plan is to improve horse welfare and provide tools to manage any public pressure related to horse welfare and horses processed for food.**
- ✓ **The first step was to provide a situational analysis report - *The Alberta Horse Welfare Report* which was released in 2008**

The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

- ✓ **Most welfare reports received by Alberta SPCA pertained to horses**

  - **Founded complaints**
    - **Fat and foundered animals**
    - **Horses in poor condition or emaciated body condition**
    - **Long hooves**
    - **Old horses loosing condition**

  - **Two primary types horse owners for complaints:**
    - **Acreage owners: ignorant to basic horse care requirements. Not motivated to seek out information - want easy recipe on horse care**
    - **Long time horse owners: never update knowledge, do not adjust management practices for changing environmental conditions and do not regularly monitor animals.**

The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

- Approximately 300,000 horses

-Average horse owner is a female between 26 - 65

-In Alberta it is estimated to cost $3,522 per year to keep a horse

-Horses sold for 3 reasons:
- **dissatisfaction with horse**
- **the horse was bred to be sold**
- **owner downsizing number of horses owned**

-Means of culling:
- **35.2% of horses owners delivered or shipped their horses to the meat plant.**
- **35.7% Euthanized their horses.**
- **22.78% sold through auctions, some of which then go to meat plants.**

(2003 Alberta Horse Industry Survey)

The Alberta Horse Welfare Report

Findings of the report:

- **2 horse dealers surveyed - 1 buys from referrals, 2 primarily uses auctions**

  - **Horses bought through auctions are more likely to have welfare problems. Only 20% were considered to have no issues.**
  - **60% Horses bought from directly from owner no issues.**
  - **Remaining 40% (Buyer 1)/80% (Buyer 2) were fat/foundered, skinny, injured/deformed, wild, behavior problems, older animals or other.**

- **In 2003, .14% of horses arrived at plants as downers. In 2004 & 2005 the number decreased to .05% Decline most likely due to CFIA's focus on fitness to transport.**

- **Since the closing of the US plants, horses exported to Canada has increased 41%**

The Alberta Equine Welfare Group believes that processing horses for food is a humane end to a horse's life. This group is committed, and encourages other horse industry groups, to seek the continuous improvement of equine welfare and develop open communication to increase the awareness of the humane approaches to husbandry, handling, transporting and processing of horses in Canada.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Owner induced neglect is the core welfare issue facing horses regardless of the availability of horse meat plants.

- All components of the industry are responsible for passes as acceptable.

- Focus on horse owner

✓ Humane handling guidelines	Completed, now available
✓ Animal welfare audits at all horse plants	In progress
✓ Mandatory training of all transporters	Available, not yet required
✓ BPM's at all feedlots	
✓ Benchmark humane handling practices, especially transport	
✓ Ban double-deckers	Be proposed by CFIA and Industry
✓ Call for enhanced surveillance by CFIA	In progress

As transporters of animals we must…

1. Ensure <u>all</u> animals are transported humanely.

2. Require training for haulers.

3. Work with legislators and government agencies on transport laws.

4. Work on public relations campaigns that tell consumers we take care of the animals in our care.

5. Verify we are walking the talk.

Looking for more information?

www.livestockhandling.net

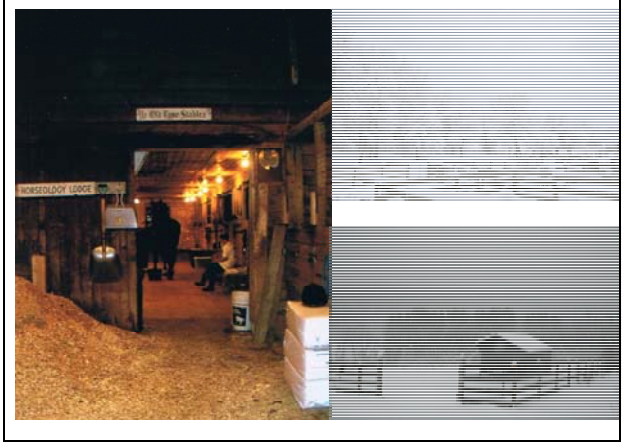
Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

Little Brook Farm Offers Humane Alternatives for the "Unwanted" Horse

Lynn Cross
Little Brook Farm: An Equine
Educational Center and Sanctuary
Old Chatham NY

Solutions and Options for the
"Unwanted Horse"

Solutions and Options for the
"Unwanted Horse"



Additional Locations

Schools, Agencies, and Organizations

Pre-School

Head Start- Columbia County, NY
Mt. Pleasant Reformed Church Preschool- Hudson, NY
Story Place- Schodack, NY
Village Preschool- West Sand Lake, NY

Middle School

Chatham Middle School- Chatham, NY
Icabod Crane- Kinderhook, NY
Hudson Middle School- Hudson NY

High School

Chatham High School- Chatham, NY
Columbia High School- Hudson, NY
Icabod Crane- Kinderhook, NY
Hawthorne Valley- Harlemville, NY

Elementary School

Chatham MED- Chatham, NY
Crosby Elementary- Pittsfield, MA
Greenport Elementary- Hudson, NY
John L. Edwards- Hudson, NY
Montessori School of Albany- Albany, NY
Mt. Road School- New Lebanon, NY
Maplewood Elementary- Watervaliet, NY

Colleges

Russell Sage- Troy, NY
Hudson Valley Community College- Rennselear, NY
Skidmore College- Saratoga, NY
RPI- Troy, NY
Cazenovia College- Cazenovia, NY

Schools, Agencies, and Organizations

Continued

Schools Serving Individuals
With Special Needs

Berkshire Union Free School- Canaan, NY
Cardinal Hayes- Amenia, NY
Early Childhood Development Center- Albany, NY
Green Chimneys- Brewster, NY
Neil Hellman School- Albany, NY
Questar III- Columbia & Greene Counties, NY
Wildwood- Latham, NY

Foster Care Agencies

Berkshire Farm Centers & Services- Schenectady, NY
Mass. Department of Social Services
Parson's Child & Family Center- Albany, NY
Northeast Parents & Child- Schenectady, NY
Colombia County Dept. Social Services- Hudson, NY

Group Homes

Gypsy Lane- Troy, NY
O.D. Heck Developmental Center- Valatie, NY
Living Resources- Schodack, NY
Prominade Hill- Hudson, NY
Special Needs of Hudson- Philmont, NY
Stockport I.C.F- Stockport, NY
Tri-Form Camphill Community

Organizations Serving Individuals
With Special Needs

Catholic Charities
Camry Statewide Services
Deveroux Foundation
Living Resources
S.P.R.O.U.T, Inc.

Schools, Agencies, and Organizations

Continued

A.R.C

Columbia County of NY
Berkshire County of Mass
Schenectady County of NY
Rennselear County of NY
Saratoga County of NY

Health Related Organizations

Bellevue Hospital- Albany, NY
Columbia County Mental Health
Albany Mental Health ICM

Events

Special Olympics 1987
Abbr. Equines Miniature Horse Club
Columbia County Farm Fest
Columbia County Chamber of Commerce
Flag Day Parade (Hudson, NY)
Old Chatham Parade
Hannaford Health Expo
All About Kids Trade Show
U.S. Park Services
Hudson Valley Vegetarian Society
Columbia County Probation
PBS Documentary
Shaker Museum- Old Chatham, NY
World Exposure
Ghent Community Day

Schools, Agencies, and Organizations

Continued

Youth Organizations

4-H
Girl Scouts of America
Boys Scouts of America
O.C. Pony Club
Plast Camp
Powell House
Calamity Jane Productions
Chatham Theatre Company
International Exchange Forum
Chatham Kids Club
Project Unite
School and Community Services
A.R.K- Troy, NY
Berkshire Morgan Horse Youth Club
Therapeutic After School Program

Rescue groups / Organizations

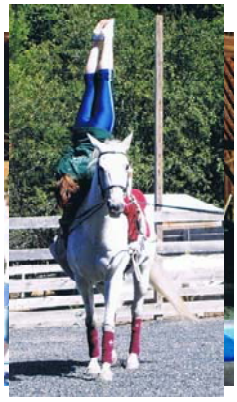
Animal Kind
Farm Sanctuary
Columbia / Greene Humane Society
Out-Of-The-Pits
Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation
Standardbred Retirement Foundation
Eleanor Sansani Shelter
Mohawk – Hudson River Humane Society
Animal Lovers
PETA
Whiskers
Berkshire Humane Society
Guilderhaven Humane Society

Our Horses' Versatility

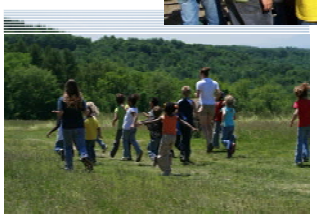
Therapeutic Riding through B.I.T.S. Inc.

Traditional Lesson Program

Vaulting



Educational / Vocational Programs



Educational / Vocational Programs

Working Students

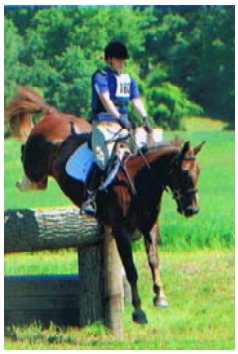
Competition

Training & Retraining

We do not Breed or Sell

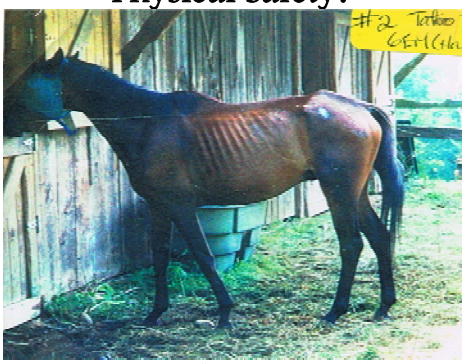
Raising the Bar

The former coach for the Irish Olympic Team offered to purchase Hamlet AFTER his rescue.



Excaliber was accepted, on trial, for the USA Olympic Team *AFTER* his rescue.

Physical Safety?



This horse arrived with: a body score of "1", rain rot, missing shoe, lameness, girth gall, a heart murmur, NO VACCINATIONS, and his coggins test was for another horse.

Summer

S
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Y

Emotional Well-Being

Goal

*To continue promoting safe havens for "Unwanted" Horses by:

*Duplicating our program throughout the country which will provide educational enrichment, vocational training and employment for our youth achieved through the partnership with their own "unwanted" horses.

* Providing an Indoor riding arena with classrooms and conference center to enhance and expand our existing programs by enabling us to continue throughout the year.

*Implementing the pending contract with Questar III upon completion of the above facility.

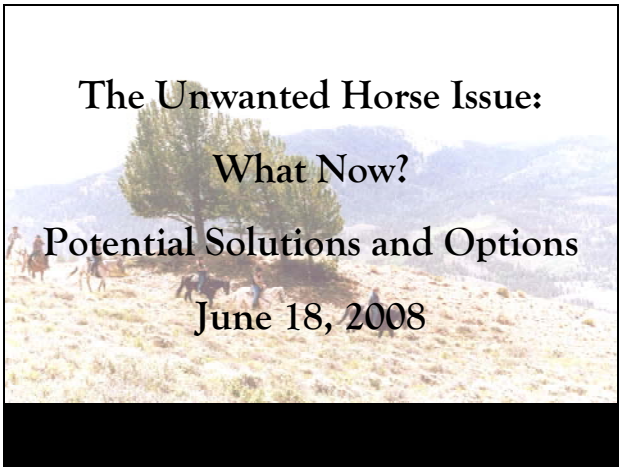
*Hosting an inter-collegiate dressage team, and more.

Thank You

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?"
Potential Solutions and Options

Tom Persechino
American Quarter Horse Association



The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

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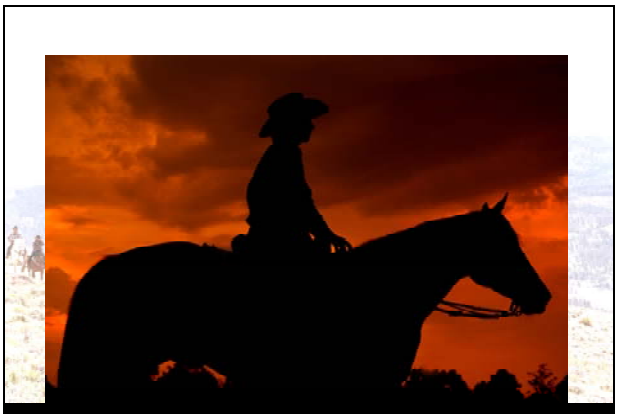

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

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Potential Solutions and Options

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Over Breeding

- Situation isn't "cut and dried"
- Not an association's role to restrict breeding
- But education clearly plays a major role

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Coalition

- Formed in 2005
- Alliance of equine organizations
- Operated by American Horse Council

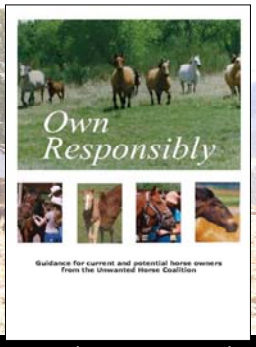
The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Coalition

- Goal is to reduce the number of unwanted horses
- Improve their welfare through education
- Comprises 24 horse organizations

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Coalition



The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Coalition

Offered by AQHA free - $5 shipping charge applies

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted versus Unusable

- UNWANTED
  - Generally healthy and usable even if in a diminished capacity
- UNUSABLE
  - Poor health, unmanageable, dangerous, beyond being a burden

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted versus Unusable

Owners must candidly assess whether their horse is UNWANTED or UNUSABLE

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Options

Rescue and Retirement Facilities

- Existing ones believed to be at/near capacity
- More facilities will need to be established
- Guidelines for operation are necessary
- Specific facilities are not endorsed by UHC
- Visit www.horsecouncil.org for partial list

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Options

Friends with Land

- Find friends/acquaintances with suitable land
- Might offer nominal fee to pasture horse(s)

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Options

North American Riding for the Handicapped Assoc

- 650+ centers in U.S. and Canada
- Promotes equine-therapeutic activities for people with disabilities
- Has stringent care guidelines
- Horses must be safe for persons with varying degrees of disabilities
- Visit www.narha.org

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Options

New Careers

- Race horses go on to roping, speed event and English careers
- Show horses can be suitable mounts for 4-H
- Public service, including police and border patrol and park services

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unusable Horse Options

Euthanasia

- Gives the owner total control over the conclusion of horse's life
- American Association of Equine Practitioners has suggested list of evaluation questions
- Euthanasia process and burial can be restrictive
- Depending on locale, euthanasia and burial can be expensive

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unusable Horse Options

Euthanasia

- Need more publicly funded facilities
- Few city "animal shelters" are capable or willing to take horses

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Unusable Horse Options

Research Programs

- University veterinary research programs do accept some horses
- Owners should check area universities or call AAEP/AQHA for various study programs

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Possible Legislative Options

Publicly funded facilities
(similar to those we have for dogs/cats)

Educational grant programs implemented through USDA

Federal tax credits for owners

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Possible Association Options

Notice on Registration Certificate

- Any owner could take horse back at retirement
- Provides an alternative for caring owners who will provide for a horse's well-being

This horse is currently enrolled AQHA's Greener Pastures Program, which may provide options to you in the event this horse becomes unwanted or at its retirement.

Call 555-555-5555 or visit www.aqha.com for more details regarding the Greener Pastures Program and this horse.

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

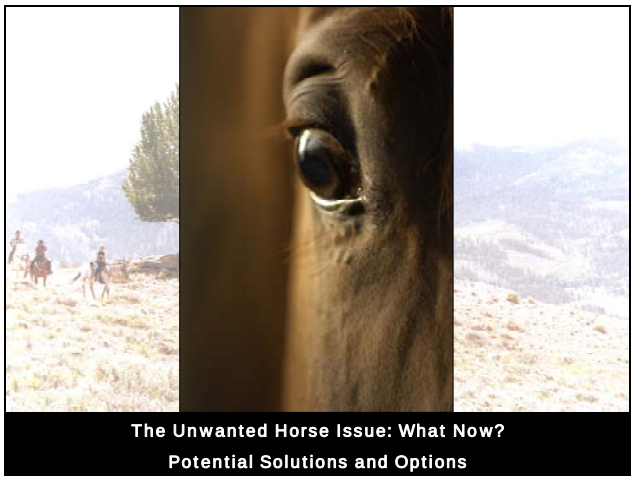
Possible Association Options

Online adoption services

Spay/gelding (neutering) education

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Possible Options
Creativity and imagination
Extreme Mustang Makeover – Look at similar program at breed organizations
Fundamentals of Horsemanship Futurity
Kentucky Quarter Horse Association Quarter Horse Breeders Challenge Sale & Futurity
EXTREME
KENTUCKY QUARTER HORSE ASSOCIATION
The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options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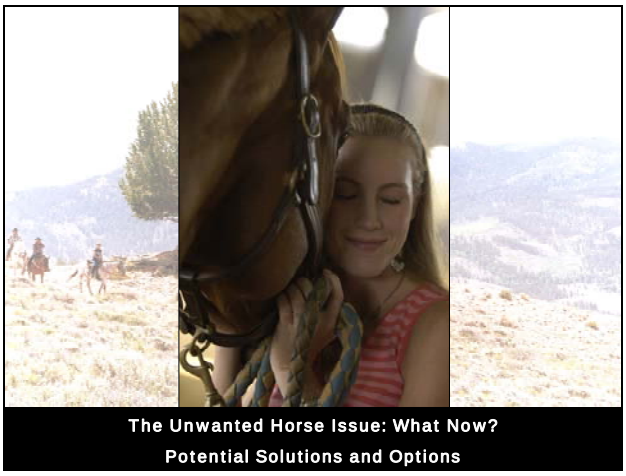

The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
Potential Solutions and Options

Panel: Potential Solutions and Options

Unwanted Horse Questions: What They Are and How to Ask Them

Al Kane
USDA/APHIS/BLM Wild Horse and Burro Partnership
USDA/APHIS/VS/Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health
Fort Collins, CO

Unwanted Horse Questions

What They Are
and
How to Ask Them

Albert J. Kane, DVM, MPVM, PhD
Veterinary Epidemiologist

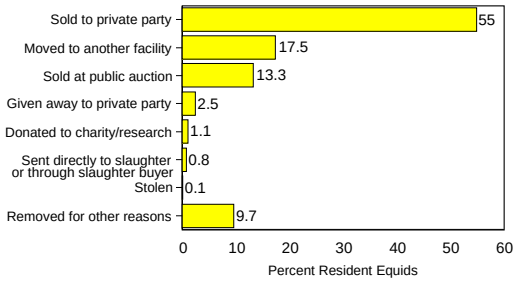
Senior Staff Veterinarian, USDA APHIS VS
APHIS/BLM Wild Horse & Burro Partnership

"Disposition" of Resident Equids

- USDA's NAHMS Equine '98 study
- National survey management practices across the United States
  - all breeds, disciplines, sizes of operations
- **equids leaving operations**
  - ~ 20% of operations had an equid leave
  - ~ 13% of equids left home permanently

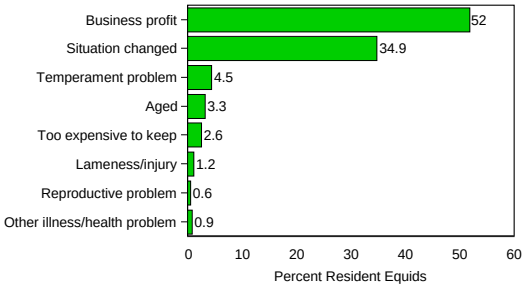
USDA NAHMS Equine '98 study

Percent of Resident Equids that Permanently Left the Operation by Disposition, 1997



USDA NAHMS Equine '98 study

Percent of Resident Equids that Permanently Left the Operation by Reason for Leaving, 1997



USDA NAHMS Equine '98 study

Prepurchase Exam Study

- Dart, UC Davis 1988 - 1990
  - presented as sound for prepurchase examination
    - 60% at VTH, 40% ambulatory service
  - 134 cases, medical records and telephone follow-up
  - average asking price = $6,500; range $0 - $15,000

63% NOT serviceable for intended use

55% were lame !

JAVMA 1992;201:1061-1067

Prepurchase Exam Study

- van Hoogmoed, UC Davis 1991-2000
  - presented as sound for prepurchase examination
    - 70% at VTH, 30% ambulatory service
  - 510 cases, retrospective medical records
  - 173 cases, prospective telephone follow-up
  - 30% Tb, 20%, QH, 20% warmbloods
  - ave. age = 8 years, range 4 - 17 years
  - median asking price = $7,500, range $400 - $150,000

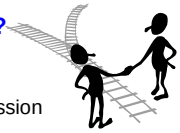
53% lame at time of exam

– lameness not associated with asking price

EVJ 2003;35:375-381

First Step

- to address the issues or "solve the problem" is to **describe the scope**, etc.
  - **What is an unwanted horse?**
  - need to agree
    - at least for the purpose of discussion



- need to be specific, accurate and unbiased.
- **honest with ourselves, and others.**

The Unwanted Horse

- there may not be just one definition, but we need to define what we are discussing
  - may vary depending on issues at hand
    - abandoned horses
    - neglected horses
    - seized horses
    - rescued horses
    - horses at markets
      - that sell or don't sell
    - horses sold for commercial processing

Describe Subjects

- start with a "case" definition

~ Demographics of Human Populations

Humans	Horses
age, sex, race	age, sex, breed
occupation socioeconomic status	previous use, training level, value "age appearance"
height, weight	breed, type, body condition
mental health (drug, alcohol)	behavior problems, temperament, vices
chronic disease hx (diabetes, heart dz, etc.)	acute and chronic medical problems lameness, founder, Rx care

Do We Know?

What does the population look like?

- Do we have unbiased data?
- If we look at a parking lot at a country club, do we get the impression everyone drives a Cadillac or a Mercedes because it is true, or because those are the cars we remember seeing?
- Do we get the impression unwanted horses are mostly lame, sick or untrained because it is true, or because those are the ones we remember?

Descriptive Study, Survey

- sample unwanted horses at starting point
  - sold or given away in the newspaper
  - taken to livestock markets
  - relinquished to rescue organizations
  - abandoned
- measure those demographic variables
  - age, breed, sex, color, markings, size
  - previous use, health status, soundness, temperament, level of training

Surveys

- questionnaire for people selling horses at livestock markets

  - challenging environment
  - often not the original point of sale
- people who relinquish horses to rescue organizations
- rescue organizations that receive horses

Value of a Descriptive Study

- establish the size of the problem
  - is it 10, 20 or 60K or 90K per year ?
  - justify funding to do analytic studies

- what are alternatives for unwanted horses
  - if a large % are untrained or have temperament problems are therapy and police horse programs really realistic alternatives?
- need to define an apple to know when we're discussing apples, not oranges

Analytic (Comparative) Study

- answer the questions:
  - What makes a horse end up as unwanted?
  - Are unwanted horses more or less serviceable for use?
  - What makes a horse more likely to be placed in an adoptive home?
    - successfully after a year?
  - Are unwanted horses more of a problem in some segments / breeds than others?

Prospective Cohort Study
(Longitudinal Follow-up Study)

- enroll horses on arrival at a sale barn
- measure the attributes under study prior to the sale
  - observation, questionnaire, interview
- determine the outcome of the sale
  - direct consignment to slaughter facility, sale into commercial pipeline or into private home
- identify factors associated with commercial use, resale, sale to long term home

Strengths – analytic study

- adequate sample sizes, easy to obtain
  - expected differences between groups of horses are large
  - on order of hundreds or few thousands of horses, not dozens or tens-of-thousands
- analysis relatively straight forward
- even focused studies would be worthwhile
- would end *some* of the debate
  - that debate saps the energy of many involved

Challenges – analytic study

- accurate, unbiased data
  - will be difficult to collect
- cooperation of sellers
- depth of knowledge at an auction
  - many sellers do not accurately know history
- climate of mistrust, harassment already established at some locations
- controversy of subject scares off some would-be researchers in the subject area

Analytic Study

- is not enough to study unwanted horses
- must also study wanted horses
- must make comparisons between wanted and unwanted horses in a similar environment
- only this approach will identify risk factors for being an unwanted horse

Goals

- understanding who is the unwanted horse and why is (s)he unwanted
- identify *alterable* risk factors associated with becoming and unwanted horse
  - direct resources at changing those factors
- can rescue horses one at a time or can try to prevent them from being unwanted

Ongoing Work

- some studies have been done / started / planned
  - the Animal Assistance Foundation contracted for an environmental assessment of the status of unwanted horses in Colorado
    - Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance
    - results will be released soon
  - USDA in process of funding a UC Davis proposal to characterize unwanted horses in US, Dr. Carolyn Stull
  - Unwanted Horse Coalition survey
  - others?

Conclusions

- more information is needed to make an informed assessment
- it is possible to design studies to get that information
- this will not solve problems, but it would be a good start

QUESTIONS ?

APPENDIX C

Written Questions from Audience for Proceedings

SUMMARY OF WRITTEN QUESTIONS

All allotted time for speaker responses to questions was taken by verbal questions. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader insight into the type of question asked at the forum and the concerns of participants.

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The following question form was used in addition to the option to use the microphone to ask a question of a speaker:

Audience Question
The Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?
June 18, 2008
Washington, DC

Audience members will be provided the opportunity to ask questions at the microphone or in written format.

There may be more questions than can be accommodated during the question and answer session for speakers and panels, so all questions will be included in the revised proceedings.

This question is directed to: _____.

My question is:_____.

****

Questions are provided in the random order in which they were provided. If the question is generic, no "Directed to" person is indicated. Obvious spelling corrections were made without indicating the correction. Difficult to read comments were provided, with an indication of potential error.

Question 1. Part 1 Directed to: Lynn Cross

How many more horses can you accommodate? How can we contact you? [please note that all speaker contact information is provided in the revised proceedings] You indicated that "we" were very concerned about economic factors—yet you quoted in many instances the dollar value of a horse. How/why do (you) have that information?

Part 2 Directed to: Holly Hazard

If horses are companion animals as in "Horses: Companions for Life", will the HSUS rally for laws that will allow people to keep their companions in their yards?

Question 2.

For those organizations that are focusing on the front end of this problem: What programs are being developed to provide "hands-on" training your problem horses?

Question 3. Directed to: Fact or Fiction Panel

To what extent is the production of biofuels preventing the economics of owning a horse, and is it leading (directly or indirectly) to an increase in unwanted horses?

Question 4. Directed to: Lynn Cross

How does Child Protective Services help you in your horse endeavor?

Question 5. Directed to: Lynn Cross

You said all or almost all horses were to be sent to slaughter and you would buy them. How do you know it was slaughter vs. auction?

Question 6. Directed to: Holly Hazard

Is HSUS opposed to the humane slaughter of horses?

Question 7. Directed to: Holly Hazard

Is one of HSUS's goals to take the horse off the livestock category from the Dept. of Agriculture?

Question 8. Directed to: Holly Hazard

How many rescued or unwanted horses do you personally own?

Question 9. Directed to: Holly Hazard

Has the HSUS sponsored training clinics for horses? Train not trade.

Question 10. Directed to:

Why are advocates for animals so unable to compromise when it is clear that their approach is not the best for the welfare of the animals because there are not enough qualified rehabilitation or rescue facilities, or money to store horses at BLM?

Why does the horse industry continue to produce excess animals that only add to glut of horses?

Why is it not acceptable to humanely kill these extra "unwanted" horses and the dangerous horses and use them for food or leather?

Why is the welfare of horses placed as a lower priority than human preferences, laziness, and/or greed?

How is humane euthanasia using AVMA approved methods by a vet using a drug different from humane euthanasia at a slaughter plant by trained personnel, and who have close supervision, such as was discussed for horses slaughtered in Canada? Does a dead horse care what happens after it is dead?

Question 11. Directed to: Panel

Is slaughter the polar opposite of euthanasia?

Question 12. Directed to: The Panel

Does horse slaughter stimulate supply/demand for unwanted horses?

Question 13. Directed to: Holly Hazard

You stated today that one solution to the unwanted horse issue is the focus on determining acceptable methods of euthanasia. AAEP and AVMA consider the use of the captive bolt (formerly used at US processing plants) as an acceptable and humane method of euthanasia. What scientific evidence and facts can you provide to support your claim today that "slaughter is brutal and inhumane"?

Question 14. Directed to: Holly Hazard (and?)

Is HSUS opposed to the slaughter of cattle, swine, poultry and other common food animals?

Rendering—uses for horses euthanized with phenobarbital

Question 15. Directed to: David Meeker

Is there the possibility of rendering for an animal euthanized with sodium phenobarbital?

Question 16. Directed to: Lynn Cross

What is your average cost per head for rehabilitation? Would you expect that previous owner to take this cost on?

Question 17. Directed to: Holly Hazard

When and how did horses become a H.S. venue?

Question 18. Directed to: Lynn Cross

You mentioned that you want horses "humanely euthanized" rather than "slaughtered". What specifically makes euthanasia at a farm more desirable than euthanasia at a slaughter facility (assuming the methods are the same)?

Question 19. Directed to: Holly Hazard

You stated HSUS/your position is that horse slaughter is inhumane, what is HSUS/your position regarding slaughter of other livestock species?

Question 20. Directed to: ...

Real world—owners should be responsible but they are not. How will funds to be used to care for unwanted horses be secured/limited—and a safety network maintained?

Question 21. Directed to: Holly Hazard

You presentation and paper represent that increases in neglect and abuse of horses since the partial and then complete closure of US processing plants is a fallacy. Colorado's Bureau of animal Protection reports a 29% increase of cruelty investigations with corresponding impounds. USDA records show dramatic increases in export certifications for horses originating in Colorado going to Canada and Mexico, since plants closed. Horse rescues in Colorado participated in a structured interview in which 61% of identifiable horse rescues (31 total) said they were at or near capacity. Capacity for these interviewed was 611 animals, with a 40% annual turnover. Those documented facts contradict your assertions. Please elaborate on the thoroughness, sources, and quality of the research by the John Holland, cited in your talk.

Question 22. Directed to: Holly Hazard

What does HSUS say to a horse owner that is no longer in a position to take proper care of a horse due to job loss, sick family member, as a result of the economy or if a horse comes down with a chronic illness or infirmity?

Question 23. Directed to: Holly Hazard

Colorado has documented significant increases in the number of equine neglect/cruelty investigations since 2004. We export horses for the purpose of slaughter currently. If H.R. 503/S.311 pass and the U.S. no longer has this option does HSUS foresee an increase of abandonment issues? If not, why? If so, what do law enforcement officials do with these unwanted horses when rescue facilities are already at, near, or even over capacity?

Question 24. Directed to: Holly Hazard

Regarding the "Greenness" eliminating the slaughter option, how does the HSUS reconcile or justify negative environmental effects of carcass disposal (i.e., euthanasia solutions in landfills, etc.) vs. using unwanted horses for a useful purpose by feeding people in areas of the world where protein is limited? Essentially "recycling" horses.

Question 25. Directed to: ...

Do we need to establish a National Guidelines as to the overall condition, financial stability, overall care and treatment, and handing of the equine?
I'm concerned that "backyard" rescues starting and being unable to support the animals over a period of time because of increased costs to maintain.

Question 26. Directed to: HSUS

Isn't HSUS against eating any meat?
If processing horses for slaughter met with HSUS standards would it be an acceptable process?

Question 27. Directed to: Rep. Winfield and/or Cong. Stenholm

It is generally accepted in the United States that the free market system works. Financials, commodities, raw materials, energy and food supplies are all traded in accordance with the laws of supply and demand. Tampering with free market systems is not tolerated by regulators and demands congressional investigation. Why is the wholesale destruction of horse market by the animal welfare organizations being tolerated in a free market economy? Signed.

Question 28. Directed to: Tim Cordes

Under recommendations, confining [?] horses in vehicle no longer than 24 hr (+4?) hours without food and water...

Question 29. Directed to: Jennifer Woods

When horses cross your border—they must be slaughtered within <u>4 days</u>—what is the care of these horses in these 4 days—Fee? Lodging? Water?

Question 30. Directed to: Holly Hazard and Tom Lenz

Is it H.S.'s aim to have horses removed from the heading of livestock?

Question 31. Directed to: David Meeker

Is it your intent as Renderers to keep horses listed as livestock?

Question 32. Directed to: Dave Meeker

Where are the 25 renderers located—how can we find them?

Question 33. Directed to: Congressman Stenholm
Do you support BLM?

Question 34. Directed to: Congressman Stenholm
Do you support slaughter houses in US for horses?

Question 35. Directed to: Congressman Stenholm
What is your stand on cattle grazing on BLM land?

Question 36. Directed to: Tom Lenz
Does AVMA (American Veterinarians) support horses as livestock?

Question 37. Directed to: Dr. Cordes
Do you have any information (other than anecdotal) on horse slaughter methods in Mexican plants?

Question 38. Part 1 Directed to: Holly Hazard and Nat Messer and Tom Lenz
It's great to talk about up-front education, but that's a long term solution—and there will still be <u>some</u> unrehomeable horses. The main <u>current</u> problem (short term) is the horses that would have gone to slaughter. What do we do with those horses, especially if transportation to slaughter is prohibited (which will further increase the numbers)? The question from the Colorado Animal Protection Bureau person was never answered. What options are available for those owners who cannot rehome and can't afford to euthanize their horses? Would there be a possibility of a program to help such people pay for the cost of euthanasia and disposal (assuming proof of poverty and the inability to rehome)?

Part 2 Directed to: Question for Nat Messer/Tom Lenz/Unwanted Horse Coalition:
Would it be possible to create a list of possible funding sources to help with horse rescues? For example, United Animal Nations has a program to help treat sick/injured animals that might be applicable to a particular rescue. International fund for animal Welfare is a kind of brokerage that might be willing to help in certain situations. If rescues had a source to go to in order to find out where they could ask for help in emergency situations, perhaps they could rescue more horses.

Question 39. Directed to: Holly Hazard
You were asked about slaughter of other livestock and if you define horse slaughter as inhumane. You did not answer. Do yo consider slaughter methods for beef, hogs, sheep humane and how can we reinstitute horse slaughter to match these other methods?

Question 40. Directed to: Camie Heleski
What are your actual suggestions for handling the "unwanted" horse issue? Your discussion largely remained on slaughter vs. the ethical solutions for which we all came to hear. P.S. (Zoo animals do not consume horses at a substantial rate.)

Question 41. Directed to: Lynn Cross and other speakers

1. How do we as an equine industry monitor, educate and evaluate rescues as for their quality and care? How do we prevent "animal hoarders"?
2. Is humane euthanasia not a better option than retraining for many horses?
3. How does the industry evaluate a person's ability to train/retrain horses? License?

4. How does the industry address the liability issue of rehabbing a horse—volunteers injured or even killed?

Question 42. Directed to: Tom Persechino—AQHA

Would the AQHA consider offering a euthanasia program to its members who may be needing financial assistance to euthanize and/or bury, render, cremate, etc. their horses?

Question 43. Directed to: The Panel

Does horse slaughter stimulate the creation of unwanted horses?

APPENDIX D

Groups Involved In Horse-Related Work

We have developed this list for informational purposes only.

We suggest that you do an Internet search for these organizations in order to view their mission statements, position statements, etc.

We do not accept responsibility for accuracy of information presented at these web sites, nor do we state agreement/disagreement with their positions.

Inclusion on this list was based on groups who contacted us and asked to be placed on this list.
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Alberta Farm Animal Care

American Association of Equine Practitioners

American Horse Council

Animals' Angels USA

AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association)

Animal Welfare Council

Animal Welfare Institute

CANTER – providing new careers to Thoroughbreds retiring from racing

DonateMyHorse - "The #1 place to donate a horse or adopt a horse online"

Equine studies at the University of Maryland

Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association, Florida Thoroughbred Retirement Farm

Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Adoption Program

Fur Commission USA

Homes for Horses Coalition

Horse Quest – information portal for credible, reliable equine information

Humane Society of the United States

International Society for Equitation Science

Kentucky Horse Council
Kentucky Equine Humane Center

Lifesavers Wild Horse Rescue

My Horse University – online equine learning opportunities
Ohio Horseman's Council

Rerun – Thoroughbred adoption program

Standardbred Retirement Foundation

Thoroughbred Charities of America

Unwanted Horse Coalition

Veterinarians for Equine Welfare

NOTES