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European Union Suspends Mexican Horsemeat Imports

Audit Details Food Safety, Animal Welfare Concerns in Slaughter of American Horses in Mexico

WASHINGTON (Dec. 8, 2014) -- The European Commission dealt a game-changing blow to the North American horse slaughter industry with its decision to impose a moratorium on the import of horsemeat from Mexico following a series of audits by the Food and Veterinary Office. The audits echo the food safety and animal welfare concerns long voiced and probed by The Humane Society of the United States. The [most recent audit](#) published on Dec. 4 is a damning indictment of the horse slaughter industry and the Mexican authorities' failure to rectify previously identified problems.

Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The HSUS, said: "This predatory industry has once again been exposed for animal abuse and reckless disregard for consumer safety. The decision to shut down this hub for the North American slaughter industry should result in tens of thousands of American horses no longer facing the dread and terror of long-distance transport and inhumane slaughter. It's a huge moment in our campaign to end the slaughter of American horses throughout North America."

The FVO audit raises serious concerns about the traceability of U.S. and Mexican horses. U.S. horses account for 87 percent of the eligible horses slaughtered in Mexico for export to the EU. The audit questioned the reliability and truthfulness of vendor statements about horses' medical treatment records. American horses are raised for use in show, sport, work, and recreation and are regularly administered drugs and other substances over the course of their lives that are potentially toxic to humans. For example, a common pain reliever routinely administered to all types of horses, Phenylbutazone, is known to pose a threat to human well-being and has long been deemed unfit for human consumption.

The audit also outlined serious animal welfare concerns throughout the slaughter pipeline, including injured animals and lack of adequate care at the export facilities on U.S. soil, horses suffering during transport, and many American horses dying in slaughterhouse pens due to trauma and pneumonia. The FVO acknowledges that the information received from groups such as The HSUS and HSI accurately depicts the extremely poor conditions in which horses are transported.

The HSUS has long argued that Congress should enact the [SAFE Act](#) (Safeguard American Food Exports Act), to halt the transport of horses for slaughter within the United States and also to our North American neighbors. With Congress last year defunding slaughter in the United States, and the EU's action to shut down imports from Mexico, there is no rationale for not banning this trade.

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Media Contact: Stephanie Twining, 240-751-3943, stwining@humanesociety.org

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