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The U.S. Horse Slaughtering Ban is Lifted – For Better or For Worse? (/full-blog/2012/02/us-horse-slaughtering-ban-is-lifted-for.html)



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By: Chris DeAgano, Senior Staff Member

The legality and ethical propriety of horse slaughtering has been a controversial topic in the United States for the past decade. While it has never been “illegal” in the technical sense, Congress passed a law in 2006 that prohibited federal funding for USDA horse meat inspections. [1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn1) This change essentially ended the practice of slaughtering horses for domestic human consumption. [2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn2) However, the 2006 USDA funding prohibition was recently lifted as part of a Congressional bill signed by President Obama on November 18, 2011. [3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn3) With an estimated 100,000 American horses being slaughtered for human consumption each year, [4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn4) there are two sides to this debate that should be considered.

Proponents of domestic horse slaughtering are satisfied with the decision because they believe that the 2006 law caused more abandoned and neglected horses to be sold and processed for meat in countries that, unlike the U.S., do not require humane euthanasia. [5]

(http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn5) Additionally, some argue that the law forced many breeders and owners to go out of business because their inability to sell horses for meat "removed the floor" for prices while also forcing owners to shoulder costs for euthanizing and disposing of unwanted horses.[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn6) Thus, while the objective of the law may have been to promote humane treatment of horses, it may have actually led to increasingly inhumane treatment as greater numbers of equines were diverted to Mexico or Canada and away from USDA jurisdiction.[7] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn7) (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn7)

On the other hand, many people do not believe that lifting the ban is the correct decision. Opponents argue that ending the de facto ban will challenge the ethics of horse ownership and undermine the sanctity of the unique bond between humans and horses.[8] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn8) They believe horse slaughter should be banned because it is inherently cruel and abusive and cannot be made humane, even if done in accordance with USDA regulations.[9] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn9) Anti-slaughter groups and individuals often place the blame on breeders.[10] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn10) They want the government to penalize people for over-breeding, rather than allowing innocent horses to be slaughtered.[11] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn11)

While there are valid points on each side, lifting the ban may very well be the correct decision due to its ineffectiveness. This is especially true considering the current and recent status of the U.S. economy. In explaining the rationale for this unpopular position, Ingrid Newkirk, the founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), summarized it well when she observed that "the amount of suffering that it created exceeded the amount of suffering it was designed to stop." [12] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_cdn12)

[1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref1) Alison Rowe, *Obama Lifts Horse Slaughter Ban—PETA Says It's a Good Idea*, Equine Law Blog (Dec. 1, 2011), available at <http://equinelaw.alisonrowe.com/2011/12/articles/legislation/obama-lifts-horse-slaughter-banpeta-says-its-a-good-idea/> (<http://equinelaw.alisonrowe.com/2011/12/articles/legislation/obama-lifts-horse-slaughter-banpeta-says-its-a-good-idea/>).

[2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref2) *Id.*

[3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref3) *Id.*

[4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref4) Animals' Angels, *Horse Slaughter – The Facts*, <http://animalsangels.org/the-issues/horse-slaughter.html>, (last visited Jan. 23, 2012).

[5] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref5) Patrik Jonsson, *Way Cleared for Horse Slaughter to Resume in US After 5-Year Ban*, The Christian Science Monitor (Nov. 29, 2011), available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/1129/Way-cleared-for-horse-slaughter-to-resume-in-US-after-5-year-ban> (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/1129/Way-cleared-for-horse-slaughter-to-resume-in-US-after-5-year-ban>).

[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref6) *Id.*

[7] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref7) Patrik Jonsson, *Lifting Horse Slaughter Ban: Why PETA Says It's a Good Idea*, The Christian Science Monitor (Nov. 30, 2011), available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/1130/Lifting-horse-slaughter-ban-Why-PETA-says-it-s-a-good-idea> (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/1130/Lifting-horse-slaughter-ban-Why-PETA-says-it-s-a-good-idea>).

[8] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref8) Jonsson, *supra* note 4.

[9] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref9) Rowe, *supra* note 1.

[10] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref10) *Id.*

[11] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref11) *Id.*

[12] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref12) Jonsson, *supra* note 6.

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