

Last Roundup for Equine Butchers

No More U.S. Horsemeat for Foreign Gourmands



Entering the killing chute in Juarez, Mexico. ©THE HSUS



Awaiting slaughter at a Texas plant. ©THE HSUS

Horses have become beloved icons of American culture—living symbols of both the bonds we share with our animal companions and of our very national character. In 2006 nearly 100,000 American horses were butchered at two slaughter plants in Texas and one in Illinois, and another 30,000 were shipped to Canadian and Mexican kill floors, all to end up on European and Japanese dinner tables. The HSUS is leading the charge to end this abhorrent practice and we made unprecedented progress in 2006.

Working closely with Capitol Hill staff, we helped to craft the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act to outlaw the killing of horses for human consumption. The House overwhelmingly approved the measure but in the Senate—where support was also strong—the legislation was blocked by longtime opponent Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT), who was later defeated for reelection, thanks in part to voter education efforts by the Humane Society Legislative Fund. The measure was reintroduced with strong support in both chambers and most congressional leaders favored a permanent ban. Prospects were strong for passage in 2007.

During 2006, our undercover investigation into horse slaughter documented the cruel conditions the animals endure during the vast distances they are transported from auction to slaughterhouse. We also revealed a barbaric killing method in a Mexican abattoir. Repeated stabs in the neck with a short knife leaves the horses paralyzed—but still sensitive to pain—before they are hoisted by chains for their throats to be slit.

Our litigation staff worked aggressively to keep horses out of the slaughterhouse. We helped secure a ruling from the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals enforcing a Texas law banning the sale of horsemeat for human food, which all but closed the state's two horse slaughterhouses. Finally, we won a court ruling that temporarily closed down the country's remaining plant in Illinois in 2007.

Congressional action is urgently needed to keep the doors of the nation's equine butcheries permanently closed, but at year's end, the trend was inexorable: the horsemeat industry in the U.S. was on its last legs.



Nancy Perry, Vice President, Government Affairs, and chief HSUS lobbyist on horse slaughter. ©THE HSUS