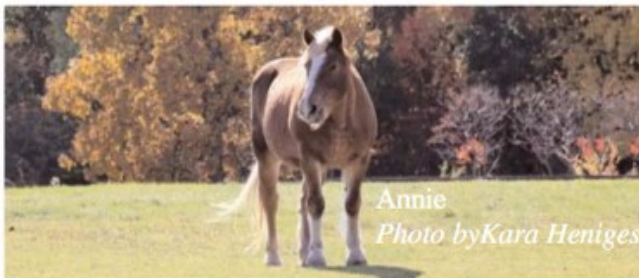


Hormones from Horses ...

A FAUSTIAN BARGAIN



Annie
Photo by Kara Heniges

by Susan Kayne

Annie is completely still. Her coat ripples with dapples, and she glistens with golden hues. She stands out amid her kith. A bright white blaze adorns her lovely face.

Annie's gaze is upon Connor, her handsome 12-year-old son. Connor is not far, just a few acres and a fence apart. I witness her big mahogany eyes trace his silhouette until he fades from view. When Annie is satisfied of his safety, she turns and speaks to me with a stoic glance.

But for the number seared into the flesh of her back, and the braille-like symbol upon her hip, her vulnerability might go unnoticed. Annie lives in Chatham, NY at Equine Advocates, a sanctuary for abused, neglected, and slaughter-bound horses. Found in a kill pen and tagged for meat, Annie was pregnant with Connor when she was rescued. She was one of the 70,000 pregnant mares confined in Canada to meet the world's demand for Premarin.

Conjugated equine estrogen is extracted from pregnant mare urine (PMU) to manufacture Premarin, a hormone replacement drug consumed by over six-million women to quell symptoms of menopause. At the peak of its popularity, the drug earned \$2-billion a year for its parent company.

To produce Premarin, mares as young as age three, are tethered 24/7 between steel pipes and forcefully impregnated for up to a dozen or more consecutive years. So small is their stall that they cannot move more than one step in any direction. They cannot turn at the neck to scratch their expanding sides, or to nuzzle the life growing inside their belly. Unable to lay flat, their legs cramp, swell, and ache. They are always thirsty. Factory workers limit water consumption -- estrogens from dehydrated horses are more concentrated. This accelerates renal and liver failure. The weight of urine collection devices strapped under their tails infect and pulverize their vulvas.

The 70,000+ colts and fillies born into this industry are labeled "by-products". The newborns are crushed and recycled like aluminum cans, or rushed live to Japan where their tender young flesh is served as Basashi. Occasionally, a foal is adopted. After delivery, the mother is reattached to the "pee line" and left to grieve.

I have invested my lifetime in the study of mares and foals, and I have witnessed their lasting bonds of love. Even after years of separation, equine families celebrate reconciliation with deep affection and unique vocal recognition.

The natural lifespan of a horse is 30 years. Most PMU mares suffer a violent death by age 12 – or younger, if their uterus fails sooner. PMU mares are primarily draft breeds; it takes multiple captive bolt blows to the head in a slaughter house to down a one-ton horse for dismemberment.

The FDA approved Premarin in 1942, and in the decades to follow Premarin catapulted to the most prescribed drug in America. From 1975 to 1999, 10-million women per year used this 'miracle drug' to control hot flashes, depression, insomnia, and other menopause-related ailments. In the same time period, research demonstrated a substantially increased risk of endometrial cancer associated with Premarin. In the face of scientific warnings, big pharma continued to overstate Premarin's benefits while downplaying its harm.

In July of 2002, Premarin's success story shut down: an 11-year study by the Women's Health Initiative revealed that the drug significantly increased the risk of invasive breast cancer, heart disease, strokes, blood clots, and ovarian cancer. By 2006, annual sales halved to \$1-billion, where they have remained.

Since 2009, Pfizer has paid over \$1.5-billion in settlements to tens of thousands of women who suffered breast cancer due to Premarin. Despite denying any wrongdoing, Pfizer has set aside hundreds of millions of dollars more for future claims. And, regardless of the World Health Organization's classification of conjugated equine estrogen as a known carcinogen, the FDA continues to allow producers of the Premarin family of drugs to omit the word "equine" from its labels.

Despite years of overwhelming evidence of its dangers, Pfizer recently announced it would be expanding PMU contracts in Canada due to the recent surge in sales of Premarin, Prempro, Premphase, Prempac, Duavee, and topical Premarin Vaginal Cream.

PMU-sourced drugs are a harbinger of death for both women and horses. It is already abhorrent to subject horses to abject torture--but for a mega-corporation to do so in order to profit from carcinogenic substances that cost additional human lives is morally indefensible.

As I caress Annie, Connor knickers in the distance, she lifts her head and looks in his direction. I am in awe of her trust, and in this moment, I wonder what she is thinking.



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Susan is pictured here with Annie from
Equine Advocates.