

## Letter from a Killer Buyer

To California Voters:

Very shortly, you folks in California will have a chance to stop a form of inhumanity so horrific you would have to experience it. But it happens every day, I know, I did it.

Off and on for 10 years I gathered up both domestic and wild horses and sent them off to be slaughtered for meat abroad.

I was what they call a slaughter buyer. I bought the sale yard and nickel add horses and turned them over for whatever I could make, and I trapped wild horses for the federal government for 5-cents a pound and sold them, when the market was good, for 25 to 30 cents.

If my story stopped right there, it would sound like I was just another middleman trying to make a living in a routine business that involves animals. What I did cannot be described in any way as routine. And it shouldn't be the way for anyone to make a living.

I used to round up and herd onto trucks-by any possible means-up to 50 horses at a time. Weak and wracked with pain, they would be forced to travel 1,675 miles nonstop from Oregon to Texas. No, water, no food.

When I trapped the wild horses, I would use a helicopter to herd them. A cowboy with a 410 shotgun would shoot at them, many times hitting them, to drive them into a corral. Then, to get them into a trailer, we would whip them, hot shot them (that is, zap them with a cattle prod), or worse.

If a horse was acting up, biting and kicking others, we would wrap his muzzle with bailing wire. I know of horses that were deliberately shot in the eyes with bb guns, or blinded, just to make them stop kicking in the trucks.

Once aboard they often act like you would expect-just scared to death, you could see it in their eyes. Often the wilder ones would fight. I once saw a piggy (pregnant) mare stomped to death because she got caught between two fighting stallions.

We knew to load the sicker, crippled horses last, because if they didn't survive that long truck ride, it was easier to wrap a winch around them and drag them off.

And what was it like? I have seen horses scrape the hide and meat off their withers and be forced to travel with their heads down the entire way because there wasn't enough room to stand.

I didn't start out this way. I spent my life around horses, in the rodeo and in just about every other way. I would never have intentionally inflicted pain on a horse. When I became a slaughter buyer I completely lost all sense of that humanity.

The business makes a man lie. You know the real truth when you tell that little Girl Scout who has cared for her horse, brushed, cleaned and kept him well fed, and thinks he's being sold to a church camp, what's really going to happen.

You know that he is going to be dragged off the truck, smashed in the head repeatedly with a pneumatic bolt gun (or shot in the head with a .22), and have his throat slit.

I'm no bleeding heart liberal, that's for sure, but I know this. The way we dispose of horses now is wrong.

If people inflicted these atrocities on dogs and cats we would lock them up for cruelty. Why should it be OK to do it to horses? We should euthanize them, just like we do other pets.

So when you think about Proposition 6 on Election Day, think about that Girl Scout and that pet whose last moments were probably spent shaking in fear and squealing in pain. Because that's what this issue is really about-humanity, not horse meat.

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