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EWA and ALC produce evidence showing GAO Horse Welfare report was fraudulent

EWA (Chicago) – The Equine Welfare Alliance (EWA) and the Animal Law Coalition (ALC) announced today that they have irrefutable evidence showing that the Government Accountability Office fraudulently misrepresented horse abuse and neglect data in their report GAO 11-228.

The GAO report blamed falling horse prices and increased abuse and neglect on the closing of the domestic slaughter plants in 2007. Shortly after GAO issued the report, a conference committee reinstated funding for horse slaughter inspections, opening the way for slaughter to return to the US. Widely quoted in the media, the report is also provided as evidence in the lawsuit filed by Valley Meats against the USDA.

The EWA and ALC have provided both a video and a white paper showing how the fraud was committed. The ten minute [video](#), *How the GAO deceived Congress about horse slaughter* was released on YouTube, and shows step by step how the GAO hid information in its possession showing abuse and neglect was in decline and misrepresented the data as showing it was increasing.

The fraud was discovered by the EWA while collecting data for equine abuse and neglect rates across the country. “We were looking for the correlation between various factors such as unemployment, slaughter and hay prices on a state by state basis,” explained EWA’s John Holland, “and when we looked at the Colorado data, we were reminded of its mention in the GAO report.”

The GAO claimed in the report to have contacted state veterinarians across the country and to have been told that abuse and neglect was increasing everywhere in the wake of the closing of the US plants in 2007. These were the same officials EWA contacted looking for states that kept records.

The EWA found data from six states; Oregon, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Georgia and Colorado. The records showed that abuse and neglect had been in decline between 2008 and 2010 (the last year of the GAO study), and that the GAO had used the wrong dates on the Colorado data to make it appear abuse had increased 60%.

“We had accepted that abuse was probably increasing as the result of the bad economy,” says Holland, “so imagine our surprise when we found it had been decreasing.” The EWA study finally showed the reason: drought. Drought and the subsequent increases in hay prices correlated tightly with the abuse and neglect numbers, and outweighed the influence of the recession and other factors.

“Not only did the GAO misrepresent the data, they completely missed the importance of hay prices and availability.” said Holland. The EWA filed a FOIA request for the data used by the GAO and the request was denied. The EWA also filed an IG complaint, and finally had a conference call with the GAO to request the report be withdrawn. The GAO refused any response except to say that their reports were flawlessly cross checked.

Victoria McCullough, owner of Chesapeake Petroleum and internationally known equestrian, said “Acceptance of lower standards results in failed policies and most significantly failures of public interest. Special Interest encroachment within Washington must not be allowed to erode public trust.”

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Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSxUPNgzgn4&feature=youtu.be>

The Equine Welfare Alliance (EWA) is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with over 300 member organizations and over 1,000 individual members worldwide in 21 countries. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org

The Animal Law Coalition (ALC) is a coalition of pet owners and rescuers, advocates, attorneys, law students, veterinarians, shelter workers, decision makers, and other citizens, that advocates for the rights of animals to live and live free of cruelty and neglect. www.animallawcoalition.com