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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA to Grant Horse Meat Inspections

EWA (Chicago) – The Equine Welfare Alliance has learned from multiple sources that the USDA will announce a grant of horse meat inspections to the Valley Meats Company in Roswell, NM tomorrow. The plant has been involved in litigation with the USDA, accusing it of intentionally delaying a grant of inspections. The EWA has further learned that announcements will be made next week granting inspections to plants in Iowa and Missouri. Friday, June 28th, was a deadline set by the court for a response from the USDA in the litigation.

The House and Senate appropriations committees have both passed amendments to the 2014 USDA budget that would prohibit funding for such inspections, in essence banning horse slaughter in the U.S. The administration and Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack have requested that they not be funded. If the USDA budget in the House and Senate receives a vote, EWA is assured it will pass in both chambers, and the plants would again lose inspectors and be forced to close at the end of October.

The inspections were first defunded in 2007, but all three foreign plants then operating in Illinois and Texas had already been shut down by state laws before the courts had decided on challenges to the defunding. Essentially the defunding simply kept the plants from moving to other states.

Funding was restored in 2011 when the House passed a defunding amendment, but the Senate did not. A four member conference committee then reinstated the funding by a three to one vote. Since the reinstatement several plants have requested that they be granted inspections. How soon any of these companies might begin slaughtering horses is unclear. Valley Meats still must obtain a

water discharge permit in order to begin operations, and there is some question about other permits. The New Mexico Environmental Department is expected to hold a public hearing on the Valley Meats discharge permit within 30 days.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance (EWA) is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with over 290 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.
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