

The Link between Horse Slaughter and Animal Cruelty

Intro:

(SLIDE 1) For the past five years a major part of Animals' Angels' work has been the investigation of what happens to horses dragged into the horse slaughter pipeline. **Documenting** the underworld of horse slaughter in the United States as well as Canada and Mexico, Animals' Angels has been "there with the animals", at auctions, during transport, at collecting stations, and at the slaughter plants.

The evidence that we have obtained across the country is vast and clear--Horse slaughter is a horse's worst nightmare.

MAIN PART:

A. Auctions:

1. Loading Ramp

(SLIDE 2) **Everything changes** at the auction loading dock the minute a horse is unloaded and someone calls it "kill" horse. **At this moment** handling and conditions for this animal flip and everything this horse experiences from here on is dramatically different—more violent, aggressive, dangerous, and very far from humane.

2. Pens:

(SLIDE 3) "**Kill**" horses are put in large, often dangerously crowded pens, containing perhaps 50 or more horses of all sizes and genders including stallions.

(SLIDE 4) **Crammed together**, nervous, quickly things are in an uproar with fighting, kicking, biting, and severe injuries. We have documented these horses dying from a bad kick to the head, or from being trampled in a packed pen.

3. Movement:

(SLIDE 5) **Workers sloppy and cruel efforts** to handle these horses include: moving way too many horses at the same time, slamming heavy gates on the horses' body or head, hitting them hard over the head with wooden sticks or pipes, poking them in the eyes, using electric prods or even hydraulic gates. **The result of**

these techniques (if you want to call them that) is more chaos. Horses slip, fall and get trampled.

4. Location & Time of Sale:

(**SLIDE 6**) **Even when it comes to the sale itself**, significant differences can be observed: At some locations, like here in Shipshewana, IN, slaughter horses are not sold inside the auction ring, but straight from pens in the back. **At other locations**, the kill horse sale takes place in the middle of the night, after most of the public has left.

5. Treatment of sick or injured slaughter horses:

(**SLIDE 7**) **The cruelest and most offensive part** of how these horses are treated differently, is the treatment of the sick and injured. **As mentioned earlier**, many horses obtain injuries at the auction due to the poor handling they are exposed to.

Others arrive already in distress, such as these horses (shown here on....) , brought in with very painful conditions. The auction owner had the horses legally in his care for over a week. One had an aggressive form of cancer of the eye, infested with flies and parasites. The other had an abscess that had eaten a hole in his face and severely limited his ability to drink or eat. After documenting the situation, we called law enforcement right away. **Any normal owner** would have faced charges. But the auction vet looked at these suffering horses and said they were, “fine for slaughter”-- when what they needed was medical care. As soon as the vet said the horses were ‘fine for slaughter, fit for travel’, the humane officer in charge totally stepped back, losing all interest in enforcing the law. **These horses** continued their torturous journey in the horse slaughter pipeline.

(**SLIDE 8**) **When we contact** auction veterinarians or law enforcement, we hear very often: “It is going to slaughter anyway” – OR “Well, that’s why it is selling for slaughter.” It is clear to us in our investigations that a ‘kill horse’ is treated with disturbing cruelty and indifference even from those who would normally protect and advocate for the animal’s well-being.

6. Who supplies these horses?

(SLIDE 9) The question is: Who supplies these horses? Pro Slaughter Advocates like to paint the picture that these horses come from private individuals, forced by today's bad economy "to get rid of" their horse. **While that does happen**, our investigations show that the majority of these horses come from other sources.

I encourage everyone to visit one of the large slaughter sales and observe the loading ramp area the night before the sale and on sale day. You will notice that many of the horses are brought in groups of 10-15 - dropped off in very nice, high end horse trailers, pulled by even nicer, new pick up trucks. **Recently at PA** and CO auctions we watched entire groups of broodmares (most of them with foals by their side and pregnant again) being dumped and immediately scooped up by the kill buyers.

(SLIDE 10) The Race Horse Industry also supplies their fair share of horses—not fast enough, not winning enough, or injured during their last race. The fate of these people-trusting horses is especially hopeless, since many of them don't even make it to the sale, but are sold in the parking lot straight to the kill buyer – taking away any chance of being bought by caring individuals.

The pictures here show 2 incidences of these parking lot sales at the New Holland Auction. As you can see, the trailer pulls up right next to the kill buyer's truck. The whole transaction happens in seconds – so fast, it is like it didn't happen at all. **Some of the horses** inside this kill buyer's trailer had just raced at Charlestown, Penn National and Mountaineer – all are race tracks with a non-slaughter policy. Apparently race track policy is not a deterrent to these people...

Animals' Angels has submitted all the evidence to the Racing Commission and is working with PA authorities. The investigation is still ongoing, but we expect soon the people involved in this trade will be held accountable and will be very discouraged from doing this in the future.

B.) Transport

1. Double Deck:

(SLIDE 11) From the auction, horses are transported to feedlots and collecting stations. Double Deck Trailers, capable of holding 45 or more horses, were very popular among the kill buyers. However, after years of filing complaints and providing them with evidence about the cruelty of double deck transport, the USDA has just few weeks ago finally responded:

Starting October 7, 2011 it will be illegal to transport slaughter horses to any location on a double deck, including all transports to auction and collecting stations. Having watched many of these trailers load and having documented what the horses went through inside these trailers during transport, I believe this is a major improvement, though it does not by any means fix horse slaughter...

2. Transport Times:

(SLIDE 12) Without double deck trailers, horses suffer one less terror. But since there are no regulations in place that tell transport companies how many horses they can load on a trailer, how many dividers they need to place or that they have to equip the trailer with a water system—horses will continue to suffer.

(SLIDE 13) In the US, it is perfectly legal to transport a horse 28 hours; we have followed the trucks and documented transports of 35 hours and more. Yet even the minimum protection of the 28 hour law is questionable.

Responding to our recent request regarding the number of violations of the 28 hour law on file, the USDA answered, “1.” And the one case they have on file is a case for which Animals’ Angels provided all the evidence – when our investigators followed a Sugarcreek Auction truck for 36 hours from Ohio to Texas.

There are no other violations on file, no fines, no records because there is no enforcement, no monitoring, and it is tempting to just say the law is a joke. Horses are left with no protection.

3. Open Deck Trailers:

(SLIDE 14) **At the southern border**, open deck trailers are still widely used to transport slaughter horses. These trailers offer no protection from the elements and the ruthless heat. **Also, transport in these trailers** is extremely dangerous for horses because there is a high risk of head injuries from hitting the overhead often-broken metal pipes, and of getting stuck in between the pipes and breaking their necks.

The Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulation states that: Trailers have to be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that at all times protects the health and well-being of the equines being transported. **The open deck trailers** definitely do not fit into this definition – which raises the question as to why the USDA still allows their use...

4. Slaughter Horse Transport Program

(SLIDE 15) **It also raises the broader question:** How effective is the USDA Slaughter Horse Program and the protections provided by the regulation?

The Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulation has been in effect since December 2001. So in the past 10 years, only 280 violations have been recorded with a total of 458 different violators. As of April 30 2011, only 51 of the 458 violators have even been fined –

...**all of which is less surprising** when one learns as we have in our recent FOIA request, that there is one person only working and overseeing the program.

Effective enforcement of the regulation & monitoring at transfer points is virtually nonexistent. There is no accountability, and there are very little consequences. As a result the cruel conditions and the inhumane transports our investigators observe are the standard operating procedure.

C. Feedlots & Collecting Stations:

1. Conditions:

(SLIDE 16) **At the numerous slaughter collecting stations** and feedlots conditions are generally poor. Often there is no shelter, horses stand in deep mud

and have insufficient access to water. **Very often** horses are given moldy hay or even cattle silage that can and has killed horses. **In some cases**, horses are kept in dark, closed up barns.

2. Horses:

(SLIDE 17) Horses that arrive sick or injured, will only get worse. Our observations include horses with severe strangles infections, horses with fresh injuries, horses emaciated and so sick they probably should have been humanely euthanized weeks ago.

Law enforcement & veterinarians are very reluctant to help in these situations. We are told: “These horses are just passing through” or “They will be dead anyway in a few days,”

In all these situations it is very clear that horse slaughter nurtures cruelty. The attitude of law enforcement changes the minute they hear it is a slaughter collecting station. Cases, so clear that they would not hesitate a minute to charge a normal horse owner with cruelty or neglect are completely ignored because these horses apparently do not deserve the same protection.

4. Shipment to plants:

(SLIDE 18) Once the kill buyer has amassed enough horses for a truck load, he ships them across the borders to slaughter plants in Canada and Mexico. Some horses are rejected by foreign border authorities and returned with the shipper. According a recent EU report 5336 horses were rejected at the southern border between January and October of 2010.

(SLIDE 19) The horses that are refused are often in poor condition and legally should not have been loaded in the first place—heavily pregnant, totally blind or unable to bear weight on 4 legs. **Whether left in the pen to die** as recently found at the Presidio export facility, or returned with the shipper, what happens to these horses is very concerning.

We discovered that when a horse is rejected at the export pens, there is no accountability. Incredibly, USDA does not maintain a database of the individual

slaughter tags given out to the kill buyers and it is therefore impossible to trace an injured or sick horse back to the shipper who brought it to the pen.

Also- We have been unable to locate any records of pen personnel reporting cases of unfit horses to USDA or to local law enforcement.

This heavily pregnant mare was rejected at the export pen in Eagle Pass and fortunately, a rescue was able to take her. She received veterinary care, gave birth to a dead foal, was treated for severe colic and her eye was removed. The vet report said that she was extremely dehydrated and terribly thin.

No one was held accountable for her truly horrible condition, and no reports or violations were filed by the export pen operator.

When we shared the evidence we had including the slaughter tag number of the mare with USDA, we were informed that no violation of the transport regulations had occurred (since the mare did not give birth on the trailer) and that the identity of the shipper could not be determined.

D. The Plants & the Companies behind them

(SLIDE 20) Animals' Angels has visited plants in Mexico and Canada that slaughter American horses. In both countries we found unacceptable conditions. Since our Canadian friends already talked about the situation there, I will talk about Mexico.

1. The European Importers

There are currently 4 plants in Mexico that are slaughtering horses from the US; 3 are approved by the European Union to import meat into Europe.

The main horse meat importers, Chevideco, Visser & Van Walsum and Multimeat are based in Belgium. **Visser & Van Walsum** claims on their website that the horses slaughtered for their Mexican brand "Javimex" all lead healthy lives, eat well, get plenty of exercise and experience "no stress".

Chevideco claims in their materials that (this is no joke), "The entire process takes place under the most rigorous...animal-friendly conditions, ...all animals are supplied in perfect condition, ...zero-stress situations are pursued, ...and from the

point of view of well-being of the animals, the imposed European regulations are strictly observed.”

AA has visited the plants in Jerez, in Juarez and in Fresnillo. We have found reality to be as unlike these claims as is possible.

2. Conditions at the Plants

(SLIDE 21) Our observations include: A mare with her newborn foal and US slaughter tag still attached to her hip, indicating that she was shipped across the border in the final stage of her pregnancy.

A dead near-term foal left in the pen area; horses, so weak, that they went down in the pens and died there; horses that were terribly thin and obviously in distress.

About half of the horses in the pens have US slaughter tags.

(SLIDE 22) We followed these horses when workers began moving them to the kill floor and witnessed that two horses that were unable to walk were dragged into the plant with a cable winch.

(SLIDE 23) Inside the plant we found a mare left behind in the kill box, her eyes wide with terror. Workers had left her there while they took their lunch break. Next to the kill box was a small shelf with the captive bolt and a pile of US slaughter tags with horse hair still attached...

3. The FOIA Records:

Pro horse slaughter groups have used evidence such as this to call for the reopening of U.S. horse slaughter plants, claiming horses would be better protected by U.S. humane laws than by laws in Canada and Mexico.

(SLIDE 24) However, evidence from our investigations when the US plants were still open, and USDA documents obtained by our organization via a Freedom of Information Act Request, proves operation of horse slaughter plants on U.S. soil did not provide even moderate assurances of humane treatment. **800 photographs** taken by USDA investigators at the Texas horse slaughter plant show horses with the worst injuries imaginable.

END:

(SLIDE 25) What does all this show us? There are mountains of evidence linking the horse slaughter industry directly to animal cruelty.

Pro slaughter says horse slaughter is euthanasia. At this point I hope it is clear that the reality of horse slaughter is not a ‘good death.’ Our investigations have consistently shown that horse slaughter is as far from a good death as you can get.

We want to leave you knowing horse slaughter is horribly wrong, it needs to stop and we believe that what we must do now is give this evidence wings, so that those overseas consumers who buy meat from American horses stop doing so.

Working with contacts overseas, Animals’ Angels has started a campaign to raise awareness among European consumers —so they see where horse meat really comes from and the suffering connected to it. **Some grocery stores** have already reacted and stopped selling horse meat imported from Mexico. However, it is just a start.

(SLIDE 26) It is on us to transform America’s “dirty little secret” into “the big story” that keeps getting bigger, that will not go away— **A story so big** that lawmakers & stakeholders simply cannot afford to keep around any longer.

I would like to end with a short video that we have prepared for just that purpose, as a short but effective summary suitable for sharing with your representative, you neighbors, your social network.