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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **European horse meat imports crumbling under continuing revelations**

CHICAGO, (EWA) – After years of operating in the shadows, EU horse meat importers have recently been caught in the glare of a seemingly endless series of investigative stories. The most recent blow came with the release of a [report](#) issued by [GAIA](#), a respected Belgium animal welfare organization in partnership with [Animals' Angels USA](#).

Aired by three major news stations, the report began with a question; "Do they [consumers] really know where it comes from?" The industry has long marketed both North American and South American horse meat as a "healthy alternative" to beef and pork. The ads and websites claim the horses were raised on pristine pastures and lived stress free lives.

The GAIA report revealed the real origin of the horses and the treatment they receive. The undercover footage followed horses from farm to slaughter plant, documenting their torment at every stage. At one point a horse jammed into an overcrowded trailer has its leg caught in the tailgate as the truck pulls away.

Sonja Meadows, Executive Director of Animals' Angels commented, "As soon as we realized that European Commissioners and consumers themselves are unaware of the extreme suffering of horses in the slaughter pipeline, Animals' Angels shifted gears to focus on where the meat really comes from. The claims these importers make are terribly, really horribly incorrect. Importers are misleading the public. More accurately, consumers are being lied to."

The report follows a [900 page photographic report](#) gleaned from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2008 showing hundreds of violations of humane handling regulations at Texas plants, an undercover video from a Mexican slaughter plant, and hidden camera [reports](#) from three separate Canadian slaughter plants released by the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition (CHDC), two of which were released just weeks ago.

Sinikka Crosland of the CHDC observed "Horses were beaten, electric-prodded and subjected to high levels of noise and anxiety-provoking stimuli. Mis-stuns with a .22 rifle occur frequently, with some horses hoisted while still fully conscious. It is now abundantly clear that horse slaughter in assembly-

line situations cannot be humanely conducted."

As if the abuse revelations were not enough, the new report follows on the heels of a published [study](#) in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology* which back-traced 18 slaughtered race horses and found 100% had been given the banned carcinogen phenylbutazone.

With growing concern over the food safety issue EU authorities have announced that they intend to soon require traceability on horse meat coming from third countries.

As major news sources across Europe began airing the latest report, supermarkets responded with promises to investigate. Delhaize, the second largest retailer in Belgium has asked their supplier to remove the meat from their shelves. Two other major grocers have told consumers they do not import horse meat from outside Europe. The impact is expected to further damage a crumbling market.

The industry's woes began with the closing of the three US slaughter plants in 2007, but the plants shifted their operations to Canada and Mexico, and 2008 saw 134,159 US horses exported to slaughter, the second highest total in ten years. However, the effects of the economy and continual revelations about the nature of the industry have since caused US slaughter exports to drop by 20% in 2009, and year to date by yet another 12%.

For years, equine welfare advocates have warned of the drug issue and the revolting cruelty of horse slaughter. Perhaps now that the massive disinformation campaign being waged by slaughter proponents has been exposed to the consumers, Congress will wake up and stop the flow of US horses. "The lies and manipulation of the facts by slaughter proponents has come home to roost," said EWA's Vicki Tobin, "It is time they step up and start addressing the excess horses they continue to produce every year instead of sweeping it under the carpet by slaughtering the victims."

*The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with over 100 member organizations. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids.*

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