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Investigation: Horse slaughter and rampant violations continue despite EU ban on Mexican horse meat

Chicago (EWA) – Equine Welfare Alliance and Wild Horse Freedom Federation today released the [second part](#) of a two month investigation into the Mexican horse meat trade following a ban imposed on the meat by the European Union (EU). The ban that became effective January, 15th, was imposed following Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audits that found the meat unsafe for human consumption due to drug residues.

As if to emphasize the need for the EU ban, tests on Mexican horse meat found [Ractophine](#) on January 14th, then [Isoxsuprine hydrochloride and Zilpaterol hydrochloride](#) a few days later.

The two part investigation consisted of [observation](#) of the Eagle Pass border crossing in Texas where many horses are exported to slaughter in Mexico, and an [exhaustive search](#) of US, Mexican, EU and international trade records.

Before the ban, 87% of the horses slaughtered in four EU approved plants in Mexico (105,406 in 2014) came from the US, and 78% of the meat from those horses was exported to the EU. Given these numbers, the flow of US horses to slaughter in Mexico was expected to dwindle after the deadline.

The investigators at the export pens found and reported multiple violations of the Commercial Transportation of Equines to Slaughter regulations [9CFR88]. Specifically, violations of the mandatory 6 hour offload rest period for the horses were noted. The investigators also observed one violation of a rejected blind horse, and they [filmed a donkey](#) being trampled in the back of a livestock trailer as it departed the pens.

The APHIS inspector, who is responsible for enforcing compliance with 9CFR88 was filmed arriving at the Eagle Pass pens in a vehicle registered to El Retiro Livestock, a registered owner-shipper, over whom the inspector should have been exercising compliance authority.

Analysis of the data collected indicated that the four European multi-national corporations that control the plants were able to juggle their shipments so that their plants in other countries, which were still EU approved, picked up the EU trade while the Mexican plants took over their former accounts.

While the exports of horse meat from Mexico to the EU were largely curtailed after the deadline, EWA investigators detected two shipments of horsemeat to the EU that were shipped after the January 15th deadline. The shipments were reported to pertinent EU authorities but no explanation was received to date.

While the report did not find an immediate reduction in horses going to Mexico, it did find the trade will likely be disrupted to some extent. Virtually all of the countries now supplying the lucrative EU market have also received unfavorable FVO audits, and face possible banning themselves.

Russia, a significant past customer for Mexican horse meat had itself banned the meat for a year ending in August of 2014 due to drug residues. Russia was expected to be a significant alternative market after its ban expired, but the devaluation of the Russian ruble appears to have derailed that alternative.

The most recently released [data portion](#) of the report contains a detailed history of all Mexican horse meat exports over past years, as well as an analysis of market shares. The report predicts a 30% to 50% decrease in US horses going to Mexico in the coming year.

Given the rampant violations found in the investigation, more frequent monitoring is planned for the future.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance (EWA) is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with over 330 member organizations, the Southern Cherokee Government and over 1,150 individual members worldwide in 23 countries. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids. www.equinewelfarealliance.org

Wild Horse Freedom Federation (WHFF) is a registered, Texas non-profit corporation with federal 501(c)3 status. WHFF puts people between America's wild equids and extinction through targeted litigation against governmental agencies whose documented agendas include the eradication of wild horse and burros from public, federal and state lands. www.wildhorsefreedomfederation.org