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Last proposed horse slaughter plant claims unfair treatment: withdraws application

CHICAGO, (EWA) – Following an extended legal battle, Blair Dunn, the attorney for the Valley Meats slaughter plant in Roswell, New Mexico, today submitted a [letter](#) to the state Environmental Department withdrawing the plant's application for a permit to operate a waste water discharge lagoon. The action would appear to mark the end of plans to reopen the former cattle slaughterhouse to slaughter horses, and takes place only a week before the final report of the hearing officer was to be released.

The plan to reopen the cattle plant as a horse slaughter plant had begun in 2011, following congressional reinstatement of USDA funding for required antemortem inspections. However, since the hearing in October of 2013, other setbacks had made the plant's opening problematic. In January the omnibus budget had restored the prohibition on spending for inspections, and the 2015 appropriations bills in the Senate and House have continued that prohibition.

The battle over the issuance of the required permit was one of several legal struggles facing the plant. Additionally, the hearing officer had indicated that she intended to recommend against the permit on the basis of the history of violations by owner De Los Santos, when Valley Meats was slaughtering cattle.

At the time Valley Meats announced its intentions to slaughter horses it had been one of five plants with such plans. With the withdrawal of the application, Valley Meats appears to be the last to give up.

Dunn's letter sites the "predatory litigation" brought by the New Mexico Attorney General's office as well as the Humane Society and Front Range Equine Rescue as further reasons for the withdrawal.

EWA's John Holland, who testified against the plant at the October hearing, explained "In reality, the plant faced strong opposition from the state level all the way to the Obama administration where Vice President Biden and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack had strongly opposed the return of plants to the US."

The last three horse slaughter plants in the US closed in 2007, but horses have continued to go to Mexico and Canada for slaughter. Almost 153,000 horses were exported to slaughter last year.

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The Equine Welfare Alliance (EWA) is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with over 325 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