



US should get out of the horse meat business

By Rep. Jim Moran (D-Va.) - 06/07/11 07:25 PM ET

Since 2006, horse slaughter has been banned in the U.S. In the annual agriculture appropriations bill, language with bipartisan support has been carried that eliminates federal funding for any activity involving the inspection of horse meat for human consumption. This restriction has effectively closed horse slaughter for human consumption facilities in the U.S. But this year the language was not included by the subcommittee for the first time in five years.

Last week, I introduced an amendment during full committee markup to restore the ban on horse slaughter in the U.S. The language was approved, but a floor fight on the issue looms in the near future. I hope to convince more of my colleagues of the need to continue to uphold current law making this inappropriate practice off-limits.

Horse slaughter is not humane. Horses are not raised in the U.S. for human consumption. Just like other animals, sick and old horses are not valued as a food source. The USDA estimates that more than 92 percent of horses sent to slaughter in the past were healthy and could have continued to be productive animals.

While horse meat is considered a delicacy in some countries, it is not in the U.S. There are moral implications for allowing a practice that upwards of nearly three-quarters of the American people oppose. Just because there is a market for horse meat in some countries does not mean the U.S. must be their supplier. There is a market for dog meat in some societies, too, and an overpopulation of them in the U.S. Should man's best friend face a similar fate? Of course not, and the same principle should hold true for horses.

Some will argue that the states should set and determine regulations for the inspection of horse meat. Anyone familiar with Upton Sinclair's famous work *The Jungle* knows the federal government has a long history of involvement in meat inspection — for good reason. Should the current ban be lifted, federal inspections of horse-slaughter facilities would come with an annual \$5 million price tag. Only foreign corporations, which deal in horse meat for consumption in foreign markets, would benefit from these inspections. While I believe everyone should have access to safe food, I question that we would use our limited resources to focus on ensuring the quality of a meat for foreign consumers that most Americans don't consider appropriate to eat.

Aside from the moral and cultural concerns regarding the sale of American horse meat, there are serious health concerns for individuals who consume horses raised in the U.S. A recent FDA toxicity report found that substances routinely given to American horses can cause dangerous adverse effects in humans. One example is phenylbutazone, also known as "bute," the most common anti-

inflammatory given to horses. The only way to ensure these harmful substances do not make it into the food supply is to prevent horse meat from entering the market.

For centuries, horses have played an important role in our nation's history and culture. Horses were the respected companions of Paul Revere and John Wayne. They were critical to our expansion into the West, aided in the development of agriculture and provide us entertainment and recreation. I agree with the overwhelming number of Americans who reject horse slaughter and will continue working with my colleagues to push to continue the restriction of this inhumane practice.

Moran serves as ranking member on the House Appropriations Interior and Environment subcommittee and co-chairs the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus.

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