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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contacts:

John Holland  
540-268-5693  
[john@equinewelfarealliance.org](mailto:john@equinewelfarealliance.org)

Vicki Tobin  
630.961.9292  
[vicki@equinewelfarealliance.org](mailto:vicki@equinewelfarealliance.org)

### **Poll finds big Ag horse slaughter promotion has backfired**

Chicago (EWA) – A poll conducted in January by Lake Research Partners for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) found that 80% of Americans are strongly opposed to horse slaughter. The highly respected research group based its survey on 1,008 voters giving the results a 3% margin of error. The poll found opposition was consistent across all sectors, including horse owners.

The findings are all the more remarkable given the huge media effort that was mounted by the horse slaughter lobby following the closing of U.S. based horse slaughter plants in 2007.

While the effort appeared to have worked on Congress, causing them to restore funding for horse slaughter inspections, it had the opposite effect on voter opinion. A similar poll performed a decade earlier indicates that opposition to horse slaughter has increased by almost 10%.

The slaughter lobby, supported by some of the most powerful agriculture groups in the country including the Farm Bureau, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), the Pork Producers Council (PPC), the American Veterinary Medicine Association and the American Quarter Horse Association has engaged some of the top lobbying and PR firms in Washington in a concerted effort to push back against what they saw as a victory for "animal rights" supporters.

EWA's John Holland explains "The horse slaughter issue has unfortunately become part of a much larger battle between big agriculture and animal welfare advocates. Big agriculture has decided to protect itself with an aggressive in-your-face strategy designed to preemptively crush its opponents, real and imagined."

The promotion of horse slaughter is just one of the proxy battles being waged by the Ag giants. In July of 2011, the NCBA and the PPC opposed a plan already agreed to by the United Egg Producers (UEP) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to replace existing battery cages with equally efficient environments that create better living conditions for laying hens. The move showed a willingness to attack even other animal agriculture associations who appeared to be bending toward better humane standards.

Perhaps the most bizarre example of this aggressive strategy is SB 610 introduced into the Virginia Legislature this year by State Senator Dick Black. The bill called for working dogs to be reclassified as livestock, effectively removing their humane protection as companion animals. Following an

avalanche of criticism, Black announced he was pulling the bill and admitting that he had introduced it *"to aid the agriculture and farming community at their request."* He went on to mention the Farm Bureau and the Agribusiness Council by name.

"This newest poll should serve as a warning to politicians who have yielded to big Ag bullying" says EWA's Vick Tobin, "Voters are not with you on the horse slaughter issue."

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*The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues-free 501c4, umbrella organization with over 220 member organizations and hundreds of individual members worldwide in 18 countries. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids.*

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