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August 3, 2012

To: Secretary Tom Vilsack

cc: file

Re: Sue Wallis Petition

I am writing you today on behalf of the Equine Welfare Alliance, our member organizations and individual members to clarify the misinformation and blatant disregard for food safety laws provided in the petition submitted by Sue Wallis.

First and foremost, slaughter should not be used for any purpose other than food production. It is very clear that Ms. Wallis intends to use horse slaughter as a disposal service that will be paid for with our hard earned tax dollars. Our country can ill afford another welfare program.

No animal should be "dumped" into the food chain whether in the US or exported to foreign countries. US horses are not raised or regulated as food animals. There is no traceability and it is a travesty, that the US would even consider sending meat to foreign consumers that is known to be unsafe for human consumption. Two EU FVO reports are available [Mexico and Canada] that not only revealed banned substances in US horses but falsified paperwork stating the horses were drug free. Belgium recently released a notification of Phenylbutazone and Clenbuterol that was found in horse meat exported from Canada. Walk into any barn in the US and you will find some form of Phenylbutazone.

The callous disregard for food safety in US horses has Americans questioning the safety of our own food supply. Can our meat industry afford yet another black eye because of the irresponsibility of an insignificant small percentage of individuals that feel the government should be responsible for their horses? Less than 2% of the horse population is sent to slaughter.

Horse slaughter never ended and is as available [with virtually no regulation] as when the US plants were operating. In the decades that US horses have gone to slaughter, it has not prevented abuse, neglect or abandonment. Not only has it not controlled the horse population but encourages production of excess horses.

Horse slaughter is a symptom of an underlying cause. It's time to end horse slaughter and start addressing the cause of excess horses. Breeders that continually produce more horses than they can sell need to be held accountable for horses they bring into the population and not expect another government hand-out in addition to the tax breaks they already receive.

Please consider the government cost to implement a national passport system. According to the 2013 EU regulations, every horse must have a passport by July of next year. That will bring more tax burdens to every American, not just horse owners. Consider also the tax dollars that will be needed on a federal and state level for wastewater clean-up, litigation, law enforcement, trailer accidents not to mention the complete overhaul that is needed to fix the transport program. The cost of horse slaughter far exceeds the millions of dollars needed for inspections. It is clear from reports of contaminated food sources that we already need more inspectors for our own food supply.

I appreciate your time and sincerely hope that any requests for horse slaughter inspections will be denied.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this in detail.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Holland". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

John Holland, President
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