

## Executive Summary

### *An Analysis of the GAO Report on Horse Welfare: Disturbing Omissions and Cover up*

- GAO makes conflicting recommendations to end horse slaughter or reinstate inspections so horse slaughter can resume in the US. The latter recommendation is disturbing in its reliance on gossip, speculation and other unsubstantiated and inaccurate information. The report calls into question GAO's credibility, also because a FOIA request for GAO's underlying data has been denied.
  
- It is outrageous for GAO to claim the U.S. economy lost \$65 million as a result of the 2007 closures of slaughter plants when all revenue from overseas sales went to the foreign plant owners. GAO fails to mention the substantial costs to local communities from environmental devastation, poor low wage jobs, and use of government and other resources with virtually no tax revenues from the plants.  

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- GAO has glossed over serious food safety issues raised by consumption of American horses. GAO would allow domestic slaughter for sale of the horsemeat in other countries even though FDA regulations would ban such sale and consumption in the U.S. Though, of course, there is no such market in the U.S. as Americans don't eat horses.  

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- The lack of accurate reporting was evident in the statement that the Cavel fire in DeKalb, IL was set by "anti-slaughter arsonists". The cause of the fire was never determined but did raise questions on the Cavel claim for \$5M in damages when the damage was estimated at \$2M.  

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- GAO relies on unsubstantiated gossip and anecdotes as sources for the claim there is widespread abandonment, neglect and abuse of horses which they also then speculate is a result of "cessation of domestic slaughter". In fact, GAO ignores studies debunking these claims. GAO also ignores the number of horses in need is driven by a poor economy, not lack of slaughter. Slaughter, on the other hand, is driven by a demand for horsemeat in other countries, not numbers of horses in need. It is the availability of slaughter that has resulted in too many horses.  

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- GAO intimates the stepped up wild horse roundups have something to do with allegations of incidents of domesticated horse abandonment on public lands. BLM's own documents have never said removals are necessary because of an alleged increase in abandoned domesticated horses.  

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➤ With no basis whatsoever, GAO's model admittedly ties a drop in horse prices to the plant closures rather than the economic downturn that occurred afterwards. Simple economics would indicate if the number of horses slaughtered has remained the same since the plant closures, then the drop in prices resulted from other reasons such as over-supply, decline in market and other demands for horses as well as a shift of kill buyers from using auctions to on-line or direct suppliers. [Page 13](#)

➤ Even GAO's highly suspect calculations underscore that the salvage market created by slaughter doesn't support horse prices or contribute much to the economy, less than 3 cents for every \$100 contributed by the live horse industry. It is nonsense to suggest a small domestic salvage market could impact sale prices to any extent. [Page 13](#)

➤ There is a sudden concern for exported horses even though horses were always exported in large numbers for slaughter and traveled long distances even within the US to slaughter. Indeed, if GAO, APHIS and the industry are so concerned, why haven't they proposed a ban on exports of horses for slaughter? [Page 17](#)

➤ APHIS' enforcement of Equine Commercial Transport to Slaughter regulations has always been abysmal; any attempt to revive domestic horse slaughter with a promise of minor rule changes and more funding, will only further jeopardize horse welfare. [Page 19](#)

➤ GAO's own reports show that the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) was grossly ineffective in protecting horses from cruelty during slaughter in the U.S. There is no reason to think that has changed. [Page 23](#)

➤ **Congress should take the only step that will improve horse welfare significantly – pass the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, S.B. 1176.** [Page 25](#)