



Animal Welfare Institute

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January 29, 2020

Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Anna G. Eschoo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Michael Burgess
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Chairwoman Eschoo, Ranking Member Walden, and Ranking Member Burgess:

The Animal Welfare Institute, one of the nation's oldest animal welfare organizations, would like to express its strong support for the Safeguard America's Food Exports (SAFE) Act (H.R. 961). Introduced by Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Vern Buchanan (R-FL), this popular, commonsense, bipartisan bill would protect horses and the public from the inhumane and dangerous horse slaughter industry.

Tens of thousands of American horses are shipped each year to Canada and Mexico to be slaughtered for human consumption—a practice that 80 percent of American voters oppose. American horses are not raised for food and routinely receive a wide range of medications that are expressly prohibited for use in meat products. Even so, the problem of horses and burros being butchered for human consumption persists because “kill-buyers” can legally purchase horses at auctions or from unsuspecting owners in order to ship them to slaughterhouses abroad.

On the way to the slaughterhouse, horses endure long, stressful journeys without food, water, or rest and can experience severe injuries and even death. Additionally, during the slaughter process, it can be extremely difficult to accurately stun horses—who react to noise, smells, and sounds in a commercial plant with their natural flight response. Improperly stunned horses may even remain conscious during the butchering and dismemberment process. The inherent cruelty of sending horses to slaughter is evident at each stage of their journey and was well

documented—even in the presence of government oversight—when slaughterhouses existed in the United States.

In addition to the terrible abuse and cruelty that is inherent to horse slaughter, the food safety threats that plague the industry continue to attract attention here and abroad. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration currently bans the presence of 379 common equine drugs in animals slaughtered for human consumption. However, procedures do not exist for ensuring that American horses, sold to slaughterhouses and killed for human consumption, are free of these FDA-banned substances. When horses are sold, especially through an auction, a transfer of information regarding the substances they received during their lifetime is not required. Therefore, no mechanism is in place to ensure horses frequently bought at auction by kill-buyers have not been given dangerous substances before they become part of the food chain.

Currently supported by 225 cosponsors, the SAFE Act addresses these serious concerns by banning horse slaughter in the United States while further ensuring American horses are not exported out of the country for the same purpose. The Animal Welfare Institute is grateful for the Health Subcommittee's focus on the SAFE Act this week. We urge your support for H.R. 961 and we look forward to working with you as this bill advances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Blaney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Blaney
Director
Government Affairs
nancy@awionline.org