



January 3, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence  
The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

On behalf of its nationwide membership of cow-calf producers, feedlot operators, backgrounders, and livestock haulers, the United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) writes in opposition to the *Safeguard American Food Exports Act of 2019* (H.R.961). This legislation would not only ban the consumption of horse meat, but also impede interstate and foreign commerce by prohibiting the transportation of equines for human consumption.

USCA opposes any efforts to restrict horse slaughter and/or the transportation of horses to slaughter. We share that sentiment with groups like the American Association of Equine Practitioners<sup>1</sup>, American Quarter Horse Association<sup>2</sup>, and the American Veterinary Medical Association<sup>3</sup>, all of which also oppose national federal bans on horse slaughter.

Our members did not arrive at this conclusion for lack of compassion towards our equine partners. Rather, it is with great compassion and humanity that USCA supports the availability of all options for end-of-life care for equines.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report from June 2011<sup>4</sup> stated that "... state, local government, and animal welfare organizations report a rise in investigations for horse neglect and more abandoned horses since 2007...State, local, tribal, and horse industry officials generally attributed these increases in neglect and abandonments to cessation of domestic slaughter and the economic downturn."

USCA believes that the cessation of horse slaughter only exacerbates the "unwanted horse" problem.

According to United Nations data, in 2005 and 2006, the three operating U.S. horse meat plants processed almost 100,000 horses annually and exported about 40,000 live horses to Canada and Mexico each year. About 10% of that product was sold to domestic zoos and wildlife operations, with the rest netting \$60 million per year in export value to Belgium, France, and Japan. From 2008 to 2010, the industry continued exporting horses to Canada and Mexico at a rate of 140,00 to 160,000 each year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2034431/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thehorse.com/152031/american-quarter-horse-assn-position-on-slaughter/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.avma.org/about/unwanted-horses-and-horse-slaughter.aspx/unwanted-horses-and-horse-slaughter-faq>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/assets/320/319926.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-horse-slaughter-human-consumption>



According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, horse rescue and retirement facilities in the U.S. have a maximum capacity of about 6,000 horses. Under current circumstances, it would be an impossible task to expand facilities or create new ones that could accommodate the 100,000 horses every year that are unwanted. These facilities are not federally regulated so there is no way to ensure the horses living there receive adequate care.

Disposing of euthanized horse carcasses creates environmental and wildlife concerns that must be considered. Chemical agents used in the process can kill scavenger species. Also, burial is not permitted in many areas because chemicals can contaminate the soil, and cremation can cost \$1500 per animal, which is an expense not many horse owners cannot afford.

Much of the public debate over the ban on horse slaughter has become emotionally charged rather than offering sound solutions to the problem of unwanted horses. Instead of passing legislation that creates more economic, animal welfare, and environmental problems, USCA urges Congress and the Administration to oppose the *Safeguard American Food Exports Act of 2019*.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brooke Miller  
Vice President,  
U.S. Cattlemen's Association