



May 26, 2022

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chairwoman
U.S. House Subcommittee on Consumer Commerce and Protection
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gis Bilirakis
Ranking Member
U.S. House Subcommittee on Consumer Commerce and Protection
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis:

On behalf of Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, and the Center for a Humane Economy, we thank you for the opportunity to offer support on H.R. 3355, the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act. We offer these comments on behalf of these affiliated organizations and their members, and as equine welfare experts. We urge the Subcommittee to advance the SAFE Act to a full Committee markup and a vote before the full House.

Because of the central role they played in our nation's history, we Americans have a deep respect and love for horses. It's a part of our American cultural heritage to regard horses as companions and partners in work, sport, and recreation. And just as we don't eat dogs or cats, we also don't eat horses. That is why Congress passed the Dog and Cat Meat Trade Prohibition Act signed into law in 2018. In fact, the idea of eating the meat of an animal as beloved and iconic as the horse is antithetical to American ideals. Horses feature prominently in American literature, film, and television, and we even name our most famous American muscle car and a number of our sports teams after equine icons. Unfortunately, while we have a long history of celebrating horses as something above and beyond mere companions, the U.S. has been a "producer" nation when it comes to horses killed and butchered for their meat, which is served up on dinner plates in places of the world where horse is considered a delicacy.

A 2012 poll found that 80 percent of Americans are opposed to the slaughter of American horses for human consumption. This popular sentiment is reflected in the laws of a number of states including Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Florida, and California, all of which have passed laws to protect horses from the cruelty of slaughter.

Our high esteem for these magnificent creatures is also the reason there are no horse slaughter plants operating in the U.S. The last plants closed in 2007 after the federal government decided not to allocate funds to the USDA to inspect horse slaughter facilities. This also prevented new facilities from opening. Simply put, Americans don't want their hard-earned tax dollars being used to subsidize an industry we don't support, for a product we don't consume.

Horses are not raised as food animals in this country and are routinely administered drugs and other substances by veterinarians, trainers, and private owners that are toxic to humans. Due to serious food safety and animal welfare concerns, the European Union suspended horsemeat imports from Mexico – where 87% of horses slaughtered for export to the EU are of U.S. origin – and tightened regulations on Canadian horsemeat imports.

The 2013 horse meat scandal in Europe should serve as a cautionary tale. When horsemeat was discovered in meat products in Europe, the livestock and food industries suffered serious losses. When the USDA was asked if this contamination could happen here, their only reassurance was that horses are not slaughtered in the U.S.

Proponents of horse slaughter like to characterize it as a “necessary evil,” as if horse owners have no other options when they are no longer able or willing to care for their horse. Yet recent research in 2017 found that there are 2.3 million Americans who are both willing and currently have the resources to rescue a horse. While tens of thousands of horses are still exported for slaughter each year, most horse owners humanely euthanize their animals with a licensed veterinarian when the animal becomes old, sick, or lame. If a person can no longer care for their horse, they have a responsibility to rehome the horse or, as a last resort, opt for humane euthanasia if no other option exists.

Faced with congressional inaction to pass the SAFE Act, Animal Wellness Action conceived an amendment to the INVEST Act last year, which passed the House by an overwhelming majority with no vocal opposition. It would have banned the transportation of horses for the purposes of slaughter across state and federal lines. The measure was supported by more than 225 animal and equine groups, organizations, businesses, and trade associations, including The Jockey Club, The Breeders' Cup, The Preakness Stakes, The Belmont Stakes, the Water, Hay, Oats Alliance, and others – proof we've turned the tide against slaughter with the assistance of our allies in the horse world. The measure didn't make it into the final piece of legislation passed due to lack of support in the Senate, and the unfortunate circumstance that U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., one of the bill's leaders, was out with COVID that week but it brought life back to the issue and will forever be a marker in the fight to end horse slaughter.

No animal has played a more pivotal role in the development of a nation than the horse did in the United States. Now it is time to transform our love for the horse into real, permanent protections. The forces that prey on horses are on the losing end of a trajectory that is sure to culminate in an end to horse slaughter, but we must wait no longer. The time is now.

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MYTHS AND FACTS REGARDING HORSE SLAUGHTER

Myth: The foreign-owned plants in the U.S. were a better alternative than horse slaughter plants over the border.

Fact: The plants in the U.S. were finally prohibited from slaughtering horses for good reason. Undercover footage from inside these horse slaughter facilities in the U.S. demonstrated how horrific these plants were - many horses were conscious when they were shackled and hoisted by a rear leg to have their throats cut. There was a history of abuse and cruelty at the U.S. plants, including employees whipping horses in the face and horses giving birth on the killing floors. The USDA released photos of horses with broken bones protruding from their bodies, eyeballs hanging by a thread of skin, and open wounds, all taken at former U.S. horse slaughterhouses. Slaughter is not “euthanasia” – it is a brutal and terrifying end for horses. We should not allow our horses to be subjected to this tremendous cruelty inside – or outside – of our borders.

Myth: This legislation will lead to an increase in unwanted horses and resulting horse abuse and neglect.

Fact: A ban on horse slaughter will not lead to an increase in unwanted horses or abuse and neglect. USDA statistics show that more than 92% of horses slaughtered are in good condition and able to live productive lives. In California, where horse slaughter was banned in 1998, there has been no corresponding rise in cruelty and neglect cases, while horse theft dropped by 34% after the ban. In Illinois, when the plant was shut down for two years, horse neglect and abuse decreased in the state. Allowing one’s horse to starve is not an option in any state – state anti-cruelty laws prohibit such neglect. Most horses that go to slaughter are not unwanted, but rather wind up in the hands of killer buyers because they are in good health and will bring a better price per pound for their meat. Providing for a horse, including humane euthanasia when necessary, is just part of responsible ownership. The SAFE Act will not limit owners’ rights to sell, donate, or euthanize their horses.

Myth: There is no need for this legislation because slaughter is a humane form of euthanasia.

Fact: Horse slaughter is a far cry from humane euthanasia. “Euthanasia” means a gentle, painless death provided in order to prevent suffering. Horse slaughter is a death fraught with terror, pain, and suffering. Horses are shipped for more than 24 hours at a time in crowded double-deck cattle trucks without food, water, or rest. Pregnant mares, foals, injured horses, and even blind horses must endure the journey. Once they arrive, their suffering intensifies – our undercover footage of horse slaughter plants in the U.S. demonstrated that conscious horses were shackled and hoisted by the rear leg and have their throats slit. When no other option exists, unwanted horses should be humanely euthanized by a licensed veterinarian rather than placed on a truck, cruelly transported and then butchered. The vast majority of horse owners provide their horses with a dignified death by euthanasia administered by a trained veterinarian when their horses become elderly, ill, or lame.

Myth: Banning horse slaughter undermines private property rights.

Fact: Allowing horse slaughter facilitates violation of property rights by encouraging the conversion of private property when horses stolen and sold for a profit. Many domestic horses are stolen out of pastures and barns every year for the horsemeat trade. When California banned horse slaughter in 1998, the horse theft rate dropped 34%. Further, private property rights do not grant owners the unfettered right to abuse their animals. Every state has anti-cruelty laws that mandate protections for animals. Owners will still have ample legal options of reselling, donating, or euthanizing their horse, which costs approximately \$200-300 – the amount of one month's keep for a horse).

Myth: Ending horse slaughter will cause environmental harm because there will be so many carcasses in need of disposal.

Fact: USDA documents that more than 92% of horses that go to slaughter are in good condition – they will not need to be euthanized. Some 900,000 horses die annually and are safely disposed of by means other than slaughter, and the infrastructure can easily absorb an increase in numbers. Rendering, incineration and burial are all options, depending on local laws. Conversely, the operation of the horse slaughterhouses has a very real negative environmental impact, with all three in violation of local environmental laws related to the disposal of blood and other waste materials.

Myth: If this legislation is enacted, the federal government will face the financial burden of care for horses no longer going to slaughter.

Fact: This assertion rests on the false premise that all horses currently going to slaughter would become the financial responsibility of the federal government. Horse owners, not the government, will remain responsible for the care of their horses. Owners who no longer wish to keep their horses and who cannot sell or place their horses in a new home will have the option of humane euthanasia. The average cost for veterinarian-administered euthanasia and carcass disposal – approximately \$200-300, the cost of one month's care – is simply a part of responsible horse ownership.

COMMON HORSE SLAUGHTER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Won't this legislation prohibit owners from putting horses down on their property?

Answer: Absolutely not. In fact, that is exactly the sort of humane treatment we mean to encourage rather than loading horses on to trucks for days of suffering and a cruel death. More than 90 percent of all horse owners already use humane euthanasia when their horse is too old or ill to enjoy a good quality of life. This legislation specifically prohibits the commercial slaughter of horses for human consumption – humane euthanasia will continue to be a legal option.

Question: What will we do with all the unwanted horses who otherwise would go to slaughter if there isn't room for them in sanctuaries?

Answer: Not every horse currently going to slaughter will need to be absorbed into the rescue community – only a small minority of horses will need placement. Most will be sold to a new owner and others will be kept longer. For the small number unable to find a home or enjoy a good quality of life, a licensed veterinarian can provide humane euthanasia. USDA documents that 92.3% of all horses sent to slaughter are in good condition and therefore able to live out a productive life. Passage of this legislation will not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of horses sent to rescue facilities, precisely because humane euthanasia is so widely used. Hundreds of horse rescue organizations operate around the country, and additional facilities are being established.

Question: If slaughter is not an option, what will we do with sick, old and "unwanted horses?"

Answer: Approximately 900,000 horses die annually in this country (10 percent of an estimated population of 9 million) and the vast majority are not slaughtered, but euthanized and rendered or buried. Humane euthanasia and carcass disposal is highly affordable and widely available. The average cost of having a horse humanely euthanized and safely disposing of the animal's carcass is usually between two hundred and three hundred dollars, approximately the average monthly cost of keeping a horse.

Question: Is it true that slaughter is only a last resort for infirm, dangerous or no longer serviceable horses?

Answer: No. 92.3 percent of horses arriving at slaughter plants in this country are in "good" condition, according to the US Department of Agriculture's Guidelines for Handling and Transporting Equines to Slaughter. Horses arrive at slaughter after being purchased by "killer buyers" (middlemen hired by slaughterhouses to secure horses) who seek out healthy, fat horses who provide greater profits than older, leaner horses. For those who are sick or injured, the last resort should be immediate euthanasia rather subjecting such vulnerable horses to grueling transport and a terrible slaughter process.

Question: Won't the disposal of thousands of horse carcasses cause environmental harm?

Answer: Approximately 900,000 horse carcasses are safely disposed of annually by means other than slaughter, and the current infrastructure can absorb an increase in numbers. Conversely, horse slaughterhouses have a very real negative environmental impact, with all three that operated in the U.S. in violation of environmental law related to the disposal of blood and other waste materials. Mayor Paula Bacon of Kaufman, TX – the former home of one of the three horse slaughter plants – stated, "Dallas-Crown is operating in violation of a multitude of local laws pertaining to waste management, air quality and other environmental concerns... Residents are also fed up with the situation. Long-established neighbors living adjacent to the plant cannot open their windows or run air conditioners without enduring the most horrific stench."

Question: Won't this legislation result in "unregulated shipment of horses to slaughter" and the continued movement of horses longer distances to Canada or Mexico for slaughter?

Answer: No. Under the bill, American horses would not be allowed to be exported for slaughter. The bill will terminate any legal option for sending American horses to slaughter – within the United States or to any foreign slaughterhouse.

Question: Won't people just lie and ship horses to Mexico and Canada under false pretenses?

Answer: If they do, they will be criminally liable under the False Claims Act which makes it illegal to falsify any information in statements made to the U.S. government. Further, any legislative change requires enforcement and there is already an enforcement mechanism in place with the USDA and border agents. Making it illegal to move horses for slaughter, as the legislation does, will at the very least, dramatically reduce the number of horses exported for slaughter and it will make a criminal of anyone who dares to continue this practice. We will be committed to supporting funding for USDA's enforcement efforts, as we have been for many years, to ensure that anyone acting illegally is prosecuted.

Question: Don't transport regulations provide strong protection for horses being shipped to slaughter?

Answer: No. The 2002 regulations allow horses to be shipped for more than 24 hours without food, water or rest, with injured limbs, with eyes missing, even heavily pregnant. The regulations only cover the final journey to the slaughterhouse. If horses are loaded and unloaded at various places as part of their route to slaughter, only the final leg of the trip is currently covered. Enforcement of these regulations will only occur once the truck reaches the slaughter plant, so these guidelines have little preventative effect. The regulations are wholly inadequate and allow extreme suffering in transport to continue.

Question: Won't the federal government face the financial burden of care for horses no longer going to slaughter?

Answer: Certainly not. Horses that are currently going to slaughter would not suddenly become the financial responsibility of the federal government. Horse owners, not the government, will remain responsible for the care of their horses. Owners who no longer wish to keep their horses and who cannot sell or place their horses in a new home will have the option of humane euthanasia. The average cost for veterinarian-administered euthanasia and carcass is simply a part of responsible horse ownership.

Question: Won't a prohibition on horse slaughter create a precedent to ban beef, pork and poultry production by legitimizing efforts to end consumption of food derived from any animal?

Answer: Americans don't eat horses and, unlike cows, pigs, and chickens, we don't breed them for human consumption. Last year, more than 10 billions animals were bred and raised as food animals and consumed in America. It is an unreasonable leap to think that preventing horse slaughter for human consumption (that doesn't even take place in the U.S.) could possibly lead to a ban on hamburgers. With horses, we, along with the American public, see a completely different situation because they simply are not food animals in America. The American public overwhelming supports a ban on horse slaughter

precisely because horses have a special place in our heritage and they are beloved companions to millions today.

Question: If there is a ban on horse slaughter, will horsemeat no longer be available for pet food?

Answer: No. This practice stopped decades ago related to the enactment of protections for America's wild horses in 1971. The US public and Congress were outraged to learn federal agencies were rounding up and allowing the exploitation and slaughter of these national treasures for items such as pet food. Pet food in the U.S. does not contain horsemeat.

Question: If the bill is passed, will zoos be prevented from feeding their big cats an adequate diet?

Answer: No. Zoos will be able to continue to feed horse meat to their big cats, as the bill will only stop the domestic slaughter of horses for human consumption. However, very few facilities have ever used horsemeat and there is a growing trend to feed a beef-based diet to captive big cats. Most USDA-licensed facilities that keep big cats like lions and tigers have switched to such diets because it is a healthier alternative for these species. Horses are routinely treated with wormers and many drugs that are prohibited for use in animals raised for food.

Question: Don't horse slaughterhouses provide meaningful financial resources for their communities?

Answer: In all three local communities where they recently operated, horse slaughterhouses had worn out their welcome. For example, on August 15, 2005, the Kaufman City council, home to Dallas Crown, fed up with the ongoing problems stretching from the plants opening in 1986, voted unanimously to implement termination proceedings against the plant. Mayor Paula Bacon of Kaufman has written a letter to the entire Senate requesting federal action to stop horse slaughter in their community. These foreign-owned horse slaughterhouses have repeatedly been fined for violations of local laws and creating sewage overflows in the community. These plants pay less local property tax (\$7500 for Dallas Crown) than an average citizen in the community. Income tax documents for Dallas Crown were even more shocking, showing that the plant paid \$5.00 in income tax for 2005. There is no import or export tariff on horsemeat and most, if not all, of the profits are sent back to the parent companies in France and Belgium. It is difficult for these communities to attract any new businesses because of the negative stigma created by these plants. The minimal financial contributions of these facilities are vastly overshadowed by the enormous economic and development-suppressing burden they represent to their local communities and the negative image they create for our country. As Mayor Bacon said in her letter, *"As a community leader where we are directly impacted by the horse slaughter industry, I can assure you the economic development return to our community is negative. The foreign-owned companies profit at our expense -- it is time for them to go."*

Question: Don't horse slaughterhouses provide employment?

Answer: All three of the foreign-owned plants in the U.S. collectively employed a sum total of less than 150 workers and those workers received poor pay and benefits. Many were immigrants working in one of the most dangerous jobs because horses, in particular, are so flighty that they are difficult to stun properly before dismemberment. This dangerous environment, where workers wield sharp knives and deal with fractious horses, does not provide desirable employment. The employment opportunities related to the horse slaughter industry were vastly overshadowed by the direct harm to their employees, the enormous burden and harm they inflicted on their local communities, and the negative image they created for our country. For the foregoing reasons, and for our nation's love of the horse and its important place in our nation's history and culture, we urge your immediate action to pass the SAFE Act into law.

Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions or would like to further discuss the issue. We hope the Subcommittee will take swift action to move the SAFE Act to a markup and subsequently to a vote before the full House before the August recess.

We can be reached at sbeckstead@centerforahumaneconomy.org and marty@animalwellnessaction.org respectively.

Sincerely yours,



Scott Beckstead
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Marty Irby
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Supplements:

The Salt Lake Tribune

**Scott Beckstead: Utah
delegation should get
behind law to prevent
slaughter of horses**

Given the importance of horses in Utah's history and development, we should protect them from becoming food.



(Rick Egan | The Salt Lake Tribune) Wild horses from the Onaqui wild horse herd frolic near Dugway, on Wednesday, July 14, 2021.

By Scott Beckstead | Special to The Tribune
| May 25, 2022, 8:00 a.m.

Last summer, when the Bureau of Land Management rounded up and removed hundreds of horses belonging to the beloved Onaqui herd from their rangeland in the west desert, many advocates feared some of the horses would end up bound for meat plants in Canada and Mexico, and served up to foreign diners in places where horse flesh is considered a delicacy. It was a scenario that drew concern nationwide from people who were appalled at the idea of proud American mustangs consigned to such a horrific fate.

No Onaqui horses faced that awful scenario, thanks largely to the efforts of [Red Birds Trust](#), a Utah nonprofit dedicated to making sure none of the horses fell into the wrong hands. But too many American horses, both wild and domesticated, aren't so lucky.

In 2021 alone, more than 23,000 American equines, including formerly wild BLM mustangs, retired race and show horses and discarded pet ponies, were shipped across the border to the slaughter plants.

Americans feel a deep revulsion at the idea of eating horses, with polls showing more than 80 percent of us strongly oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

The horse plays a central role in U.S. history and culture. We relied on horses to pull our plows, our wagons and our cannons; native peoples became expert horsemen and rode their trusted mounts into battle and on buffalo hunts. Americans have elevated horses to icon status, featuring them in our literature, films and television, even using them as namesakes for cars and sports teams.

We don't eat dogs and cats in the America, thanks to the Dog and Cat Meat Trade Prohibition Act enacted in 2018, and because they arguably occupy an even higher status in terms of their importance to who we are as a people, Americans don't eat our horses, either.

The vast majority of owners choose humane euthanasia for horses that are elderly, ill or lame, yet there are those few who turn their animals over to the kill buyers, notoriously unscrupulous profiteers with zero regard for animal welfare. Proponents of horse slaughter like to characterize it as a "necessary evil," as if horse owners have no other options when they are no longer able or willing to care for their horse.

A 2017 study, however, found there are 2.3 million Americans who are both willing and currently have the resources to rescue a horse. Hundreds of nonprofit programs exist across the country to help people provide good care for their animals, including hay banks, gelding and euthanasia clinics and training incentives. Many horse rescue organizations and sanctuaries use networks of foster homes to help place horses in transition.

While most of us would agree that the kill buyers and foreign meat companies aren't relevant on the topic of how we treat our horses, they unfortunately have the ear of a core group of members of Congress who consistently block legislation to protect American horses from the horrors of foreign abattoirs.

This week, the House subcommittee on Energy and Commerce will take up the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act, a bill to ban the slaughter, sale for slaughter, and transport for slaughter of American horses for human consumption. Roughly half of the House of Representatives have cosponsored the bill, a sign that a large number of Americans have contacted their legislators.

The bill enjoys bipartisan sponsorship, but sadly, Utah's delegation has either spoken in support of horse slaughter or remained silent. Given the role horses played in Utah's history, especially for the native tribes and the early Mormon pioneers, one would think the state's leaders would be leading the effort to protect horses. They have chosen instead to be some of the loudest voices for clearing our public lands of wild horses to make room for more livestock and sending horses to slaughter.

Horses and the people who love them deserve better. If you agree that sending our cherished equines to Canadian or Mexican meat plants for the benefit of foreign diners amounts to a betrayal of a good and trusted friend, please take time to call on your members of Congress to pass the SAFE Act.



Scott Beckstead, Sutherlin, Oregon, is campaigns director for Animal Wellness Action and an adjunct professor of law at Willamette University. He has bachelor's degrees in pre-law and philosophy from Utah State University and a law degree from the University of Utah.

Letter to the Editor from Marty Irby

Monday, February 18, 2019 at 12:39 pm



America was built on the backs of horses, and this month, U.S. Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) introduced the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, [H.R. 961](#), to end the slaughter of our iconic American equines. The measure prohibits the transport and export of U.S. horses to slaughter for human consumption. Horses have played an unmeasurable role in our culture and in building our modern-day society, and they don't deserve this end.

The bipartisan SAFE Act garnered 219 cosponsors in the House in the previous Congress. An even larger majority of the newly elected House undoubtedly supports this legislation, perhaps as many as two-thirds of them. More than a decade ago, a similar measure passed the House, and even Vice-President Mike Pence, then a U.S. Congressman from Indiana, was among the super-majority supporting the bill.

The Senate also has shown an willingness to end horse slaughter, with U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Tom Udall (D-NM) leading the charge in the Upper Chamber. In fact, last year, the Senate Appropriations Committee, chaired by my home state Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), included language in their Agriculture Appropriations to defund horse slaughter inspections in the U.S., making it impossible to slaughter horses here.

The slaughter of American equines for human consumption claimed around 70,000 horses in 2018—most of them perfectly healthy, and fit to be utilized for recreation, or competition. We don't eat horse meat in America just as we don't eat dogs and cats (Congress banned the slaughter of Dogs and Cats for human consumption in the Farm Bill and President Trump signed that measure into law

in December). Horse slaughter is a cruel and terrifying end for the horses, and these creatures have done nothing to warrant this kind of mistreatment and crass exploitation.

In 2012, [a report showed](#) that approximately 19% of horses sent to slaughter were Thoroughbreds, but there does not appear to be much data on the numbers since then. Due to the efforts of the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance and increasing anti-horse slaughter policies at many of America's racetracks, the numbers have most certainly declined, and we applaud their work. But there's still room for work to prevent slaughter by supporting the SAFE Act.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture [documented serious cruelty violations](#) in plants previously operated in the United States prior to closure in 2007. Millions of taxpayer funds were being wasted to “oversee” operations involving horses with broken bones and terrifying eye injuries in foreign-owned facilities on an annual basis prior to their closure.

As our national debt continues to rise, and the taxpayer continues to foot the bill, Congress should be more mindful of our fiscal responsibility and prevent millions of tax dollars from funding the slaughter of horses and propping up an egregious foreign-driven enterprise.

Most Americans want no part of this enterprise of supplying foreign diners with horse slabs. Even Ferdinand, the winner of the 1986 Kentucky Derby, fell victim to this predatory industry, and that's just not acceptable. If one of the nation's most popular horses is prodded into a kill chute, then no horse is safe.

In this time of political division, the SAFE Act is a bill both parties can get behind. Hundreds of thousands of advocates are calling on the House Agriculture and Energy and Commerce Committees—that have joint jurisdiction over the issue—led by Chairmen Collin Peterson (D-MN) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and Ranking Members Greg Walden (R-OR) and Mike Conaway (R-TX) to work together to advance the bill to vote. The measure would surely pass and fulfill the will of the people—something that poll after poll have proven more than 80% of Americans support.

The U.S. House of Representatives can take first action on this bill. We hope you'll support this effort and call your legislators at 202-224-3121 to ask them to cosponsor the SAFE Act, H.R. 961, or take action immediately by [clicking here](#).

Marty Irby

Marty Irby is the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., eight-time world champion rider, and a past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association.