

2 FEBRUARY 2007

Horse Slaughter Bill Introduced

Legislators from both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate introduced horse slaughter prevention bills. The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act is a bill that would eliminate the transport and processing of horses for human consumption in the United States.

An estimated 90,000 horses are processed in this country each year which represents 1 percent of the domestic horse population. Most of these horses are livestock that can no longer be considered reliable saddle horses, are too old or infirm to be of service, are behaviorally unmanageable or cannot be properly cared for by their owners.

The Public Lands Council (PLC), an organization that works with the American Sheep Industry Association, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Association of Grasslands, opposes the legislation because it interferes with ranchers' economic decisions about managing their livestock.

PLC contends that the current horse-processing system includes safeguards that are not included in this new legislation. Horses have a great deal of protection from abuse and mistreatment under current law. There is a fear that with the passage of this legislation, unwanted horses will be abandoned to the elements and will suffer a series of unintended consequences that negatively impact the health and welfare of the horse and the environment.

Horses are an integral part of America's farms and ranches. Eliminating this option of horse management poses a risk to both horses and public health. The processing of horses under the current legal structure by closely regulated and monitored processing companies is both ethical to the animals and safe for the public.