

Animal Welfare Groups Seek to Protect Endangered Species From Environmental Threat of Horse Slaughter

Front Range Equine Rescue and The Humane Society of the United States Will Sue to Enforce the Endangered Species Act

(April 16, 2013)— Front Range Equine Rescue (“FRER”) and The Humane Society of the United States (“HSUS”) notified the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) of their intent to challenge any grant of inspection to Valley Meat Company of Roswell, New Mexico pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”). Valley Meat has applied to USDA for permission to slaughter horses in their Roswell, New Mexico slaughterhouse and sell the meat for human consumption. Under the ESA, USDA must consult with the Secretary of Interior through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the impact of Valley Meat’s slaughter operations on threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat in the vicinity of Valley Meat. FRER and HSUS believe USDA has failed to fulfill the ESA’s mandate.

The letter sent by FRER and HSUS explains that horse slaughter is a threat to the environment and to wildlife in the vicinity of Valley Meat’s slaughterhouse because of the high volume of waste and other byproducts it produces, from manure, offal, and blood to hair, bones, fat, and dangerous wastewater. Slaughterhouses use large amounts of water, and the pollutants contained in wastewater can impact the environment when the wastewater runoff enters groundwater, streams, and rivers. Wastewater and blood from horse slaughter are notorious for overwhelming local wastewater infrastructures and posing a significant threat to the environment, especially in light of the numerous drugs with which horses are routinely treated that are not safe for humans. On multiple occasions, residents of a community near a Texas slaughterhouse turned on their faucets to wash their hands with water but got blood and horse tissue instead. That community succeeded in shutting down the horse slaughterhouse, but only after incurring continuous environmental violations and significant expense.

Valley Meat is located near the South Spring River, Pecos River, Bitter Lake Wildlife Refuge, and Bottomless Lakes State Park. Valley Meat’s slaughter operations are a threat to the habitats of multiple threatened and endangered species in the vicinity, as well as the very existence of these animals.

Hilary Wood, President of Front Range Equine Rescue, states: “The slaughter of American horses is cruel and unnecessary. Not only can horses not be slaughtered humanely, but the byproducts of horse slaughter wreak environmental havoc, threatening the habitats and existence of other animals. All of this to produce a toxic product, from animals not intended to become food, via a brutal process that Americans overwhelmingly oppose.”

“The people of Texas and Illinois have seen firsthand how these horse slaughter plants wreak havoc on the environment,” said Jonathan Lovvorn, Senior Vice President of Animal Protection Litigation and Investigations Section of HSUS . “The decision to park this slaughter plant on top of several federally endangered species is one more reason this entire misguided plan should be abandoned once and for all.”

The notice of intent to sue is especially timely because in November 2011, Congress authorized the inspection of horses for slaughter in America, something that had been prohibited since 2006. Earlier this year, the Obama administration decided to process an application for inspecting horse slaughter at Valley Meat.

Although the USDA apparently intends to allow horse slaughter despite the indisputable evidence that meat from American horses is adulterated and unsafe, it must first consider the effects of this vile practice on threatened and endangered species. Front Range Equine Rescue and The Humane Society of the United States will sue USDA to force it to ensure that granting Valley Meat's application for inspection will not jeopardize the continued existence of threatened and endangered species or destroy their habitat in Roswell, New Mexico.

Facts:

- Horse slaughter facilities diminish quality of life and threaten the health of people and animals in surrounding communities.
- Horse slaughter produces putrid air that damages communities, drives citizens away, and depresses real estate values.
- During their lives, horses who end up at slaughter have been given a constant regimen of drugs and other substances which are either illegal for food animals, or are potentially dangerous to people who eat them.
- Although Americans overwhelmingly oppose horse slaughter and have no interest in consuming horse meat, even those who purposefully avoid horse meat may unintentionally be exposed to the drugs that are frequently administered to horses through their possible entry into the food and water supply during the slaughter process.

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Front Range Equine Rescue is a 501c3 non-profit working to end the abuse and neglect of horses through rescue and education. Since 1997, FRED has assisted thousands of horses through its rescue and educational programs. Many of FRED's rescued horses are obtained directly from livestock auctions and feed lots, which without FRED's intervention would have shipped to slaughter. Dedicated to the horses – On the web at www.fronrangeequinerescue.org.