

## AG Intervenes in Lawsuit to Halt Horse Slaughter Plant

Monday, July 22, 2013

(ALBUQUERQUE)---Attorney General Gary King has filed a motion to intervene in a lawsuit to stop a plant in Roswell from slaughtering horses for meat because federal authorities have not yet undertaken the required environmental review.

The AG's motion, filed late last Friday, joins Front Range Equine Rescue, the Humane Society of the United States, and a variety of other groups and individuals that recently brought the lawsuit in federal district court.

AG King's motion says New Mexico has a strong interest in ensuring that "commercial operations within its borders are conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible manner." Attorney General King previously concluded in a legal analysis last month that "state law does not allow for production of meat that is chemically tainted under federal regulations."

The lawsuit asks the district court to block Roswell's Valley Meat Company and several plants in other states from beginning commercial horse slaughter until the United States Department of Agriculture undertakes a full and adequate environmental review of those operations.

One of Attorney General King's primary concerns is that horses in the United States are frequently treated with drugs that the federal Food and Drug Administration has determined are unsafe for human consumption in any amount.

In an opinion letter issued last month in response to an inquiry from State Senator Richard Martinez, AG King noted a 2010 scientific study which revealed the widespread presence in horses destined for slaughter operations of an anti-inflammatory drug that the FDA determined could cause bone marrow toxicity in humans.

The FDA's own regulations specifically ban administration of the drug, Phenylbutazone, in any horse sent to slaughter for human consumption. Nonetheless, the study found that the FDA's ban is effectively being ignored because no mechanism has been implemented to identify and remove horses that receive Phenylbutazone from food manufacture. The study determined that this shortcoming "indicates a serious gap in food safety and constitutes a significant public health risk."

Despite these important concerns about the widespread use on horses of Phenylbutazone and other drugs whose effects on humans are either documented to be harmful or are unknown, the USDA announced that, in its view, the planned horse slaughter operations would not have a significant environmental effect on human health or the environment. The lawsuit is a response to that determination, and it asks the court to order the USDA to conduct a thorough environmental review prior to approving commercial horse slaughter operations for human consumption.

The Attorney General's motion to intervene raises other serious concerns, including the additional and costly regulatory burden that commercial horse slaughter operations will likely impose on the State of New Mexico to ensure that waste discharge does not threaten area water supplies and environmental quality. The imminent slaughter of horses for commercial food production in our state, following the horse meat scandal in Europe, also threatens the well-being of our local food production businesses, especially the beef industry.