

for a horse that clearly needs a vet to provide humane euthanasia.

**Summary:**

Every year approximately one-percent of America's horses are sent to slaughter. Even in the best of economic times, the law of supply and demand is a driving force determining the market value of horses. For every horse sent to slaughter, the horse industry loses tens of thousands of dollars which would otherwise be spent during the lifetime of that horse. The horse industry needs horses to expand its programs and services. Innovative and practical programs that curtail excessive breeding, assist with end-of-life decisions, and provide for retraining and re-homing options are key to helping the horses once destined for slaughter.

**To Donate**

Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

*Yes, I want to support programs to help stop horse abuse.*

*My tax-deductible contribution is enclosed.*

Please make your check or money-order payable to:

Front Range Equine Rescue  
PO Box 307 · Larkspur, CO 80118

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# SOLUTIONS TO HORSE SLAUGHTER



*To stand by and do nothing ... makes us sharers in the guilt.*

## FRONT RANGE EQUINE RESCUE

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to prevent the abuse and neglect of horses through rescue and education.

P.O. BOX 307 · LARKSPUR, CO 80118

**719.481.1490**

info@fronrangeequinerescue.org

www.fronrangeequinerescue.org

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U.S. horse slaughter plants closed in 2007, yet more than 100,000 American horses are still butchered annually in Canadian and Mexican slaughterhouses. For years, federal legislation to ban shipping our horses across the borders and to outlaw slaughter in the U.S. has been stalled by special interest groups. Polls have shown that over 70-percent, and as high as 90-percent of Americans oppose horse slaughter. U.S. horses are not bred to be food animals and their meat contains products and medications which are toxic to humans.

The solutions to horse slaughter are numerous and are the responsibility of the entire horse industry, not just rescues and sanctuaries. Studies have shown that more than 92-percent of horses going to slaughter are in good condition. For every horse sent to slaughter, the horse industry loses tens of thousands of dollars, when you consider the amount spent on direct and indirect expenses during the course of the average horse's lifetime.

**Breeding:**

The primary means of controlling the horse population begins with breeding. Putting a stop to over-breeding and irresponsible breeding alone would cut the number of horses in the slaughter pipeline by tens of thousands. The highest percentage of slaughter-bound horses is in the 3- to 9-year-old range.

The following are a few areas where changes can be made. These solutions are provided in general terms but can easily be explained with more detail:

Implement a license fee for each horse owned, with the stallion fee being highest; lower for a mare; and the least for a gelding. Use part of these fees to provide assistance for gelding and humane euthanasia programs. Funding can also be used for qualified retirement, sanctuary programs or safe re-homing initiatives.

The states that impose brand inspection fees should raise the fee per horse, even by \$15 to \$20, to provide

vide a fund for low-cost gelding and humane euthanasia programs, as well as to fund inspectors to ensure that horse owners comply with having a brand inspection for each horse they own.

Currently, breed registries and associations often charge less to register a foal, and then increase the fee when the horse is older. Registries should offer reduced registration fees for geldings. Colts could be registered on the assumption they would later be gelded, but if they are bred, their offspring could not be registered. Colts older than one year would have to be gelded in order to meet the criteria.

Breed registries and associations should raise their fees, even by just \$25 per horse, so that funding could be set aside for use with gelding and euthanasia assistance and/or re-homing programs.

Broodmares and foals should receive handling and basic training. This would make them more marketable, because unhandled and untrained horses dumped at auctions are mostly bought by kill buyers. A horse that has undergone basic handling and training is far easier to place in an appropriate home. An incentive program, through breed registries and associations, could be implemented to reward those who comply.

Veterinary clinics and associations can - and many already do - offer opportunities for horse owners to receive discounts on gelding services to help control the horse population and educate owners on responsible breeding practices.

Veterinary schools, where possible, should offer discounted gelding services to their communities.

Since 2002, Front Range Equine Rescue's 'Stop the Backyard Breeder' program has provided partial reimbursement to responsible horse owners around the country for gelding stud colts and stallions. More programs like this should be developed and maintained.

### ***Anti-Cruelty Laws and Legislation:***

It is critical to ensure that abuse, neglect and abandonment of horses are against the law, but these violations must also be fully prosecuted. Animal control officers should have training in basic horse-handling and abide by the standards for body condition scoring. Horses should be reclassified as a special category of livestock because they are not a food animal yet are often a part of farm or ranch work. A classification of 'companion livestock' would allow for a shelter requirement, yet retain the land use and water rights for owners of livestock, as well as not altering rules for boarding facilities and other horse-related businesses.

Strengthen cruelty statutes and ensure enforcement; close existing loopholes such as feed and water requirements. For example, if there is a stack of hay on the property, but the horses are emaciated, there is no excuse to not prosecute unless the owner can prove they recently received those horses in that condition. Also, if there are five horses on a property, for instance, and one is emaciated, that is no excuse to not assist that one animal. The excuse, "it's an old horse" is not valid, with all of the feed products available for older horses and the availability of proper dental care.

Connect animal control officers with qualified rescues and other horse professionals, such as licensed equine veterinarians for impound and seizure assistance, so there is no excuse to not remove abused horses. Animal control officers should have designated safe locations within their appropriate jurisdictions to take impounded horses for the start of proper care.

Ban unsafe transportation. Legislation prohibiting the use of double-deck trailers to transport horses for any reason is long overdue. Inspections at auctions for stolen horses and those that are sick, injured, malnourished or otherwise

compromised need to be thoroughly conducted, and those horses restricted from being sold.

Improve tracking of stolen horses and prosecute offenders. Programs similar to those of [netposse.com](http://netposse.com) should be developed and networked around the country, because stolen horses can be transported across state lines within a short period of time.

### ***Re-Homing and Retraining:***

The equestrian competition industry is a primary source for horses that end up at slaughter. Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds make up the largest percentage of purebred horses being slaughtered. The Thoroughbred racing industry has made some progress in taking responsibility for its off-the-track horses - zero-tolerance policies at some race-tracks; retraining programs; and retirement facilities - to name a few examples. More programs like these should be implemented around the country.

Develop a plan whereby horse-related businesses such as therapeutic riding centers, riding academies, guest ranches, trail riding organizations, equine-assisted therapy programs, wounded warrior military programs, youth camps, etc., can take in former slaughter-bound horses.

Enhance the quality and increase the numbers of riding instructors and trainers who would take on the responsibilities of retraining former competition horses. For example, off-the-track Thoroughbreds have successfully gone on to careers in dressage, hunter/jumper disciplines and eventing.

Encourage non-horse owners to become part of the horse industry; participating in horse-related events, sponsoring programs, creating jobs. Not everyone can afford to own a horse, but that doesn't mean they cannot participate in horse activities. For example, Front Range Equine Rescue hosts a series of youth camps every summer, which are primarily attended by non-horse-owning children. Some of these families could go on to become future horse owners while others might end up taking riding

lessons, leasing a horse, or spending vacations at guest ranches.

Develop quality intern/apprenticeship programs that would work with domestic and wild horses. Many trainers and other horse programs, including some rescues, offer internship opportunities. These programs are good outlets for once-slaughter-bound horses, and allow for more growth in the horse industry.

Develop more prison and community service programs designed to help with retraining of horses (i.e., off-the-track horses and mustang programs). The existing programs that pair prisoners with horses have proven highly successful. Gentled and trained horses have a better chance for placement in good homes.

### ***Education:***

Educating new, existing, and potential horse owners about the responsibilities of horse ownership cannot be emphasized enough. The horse industry must work together to implement programs for successful human-horse partnerships. The non-owning, but horse-loving public can be more active than most realize in keeping horses from being slaughtered.

Develop more equine studies programs that bring more people into the horse industry and into programs which utilize horses in appropriate ways (e.g., therapeutic riding, equine-assisted therapy, wounded warrior programs, guest ranches, riding academies, etc.).

Educate new, existing and potential horse owners about responsible horse care; the horse industry is full of well-educated trainers, instructors and other horse professionals with a wealth of knowledge to share, and there is always more to learn. Horse owners and those interested in horses should take advantage of clinics and seminars regarding responsible horse care and other owner-related topics.

Provide community hay banks and feed co-ops, for

both good and bad economic times. Many states now have hay and feed banks providing limited assistance to responsible horse owners who are in financial difficulty. Many horse rescues around the country are providing owner-assistance programs as well. FRER offers a horse owner-assistance program on a limited basis for hay, feed and basic vet care.

Educate about the re-homing of horses (safe advertising, networking, etc.). Most owners can safely place their horses if they advertise through their vet, farrier, feed and tack shops, boarding facilities, equine websites and even through fliers posted at local pet stores. The more 'horse people' that know a horse needs a good home, the better the chance of finding an appropriate one.

Horse owners need to understand injury prevention and available rehabilitation services, so they can improve a horse's chance of returning to work after being injured, even if the work is modified. Just because a horse can no longer compete in the show ring, for example, doesn't mean that horse won't become a great trail horse for a new owner.

### ***Humane Euthanasia:***

The smallest portion of horses bound for slaughter are considered to be 'old, sick crippled or dangerous'. More programs like Front Range Equine Rescue's *Trail's End*, which provides a discount for humane euthanasia and disposal fees, should be developed and supported.

Veterinary clinics, associations and schools should offer more education regarding humane euthanasia, and opportunities for horse owners to utilize this service, with discounts offered whenever possible.

Develop businesses which offer burial and cremation services, so that horse owners have options in their area other than a low-end auction