

# EDITORIALS

## Horse Slaughter Deal Unappetizing for U.S.

Would you eat Trigger?

Do you think it's OK for someone else to eat Trigger?

Gov. Susana Martinez says absolutely not.

But a bid to begin slaughtering horses near Roswell for human consumption will mean the equivalent of dining on animals that are icons of the West — spirited wild horses and faithful companion and working animals that helped build the nation.

“A horse's companionship is a way of life for many people across New Mexico. We rely on them for work and bond with them through their loyalty,” Martinez says. “Despite the federal government's decision to legalize horse slaughter for human consumption, I believe creating a horse slaughter industry in New Mexico is wrong, and I am strongly opposed.” Her sentiments were echoed by State Land Commissioner Ray Powell and state Attorney General Gary King.

The governor plans to urge the USDA to reject the application and to ask for the support of New Mexico's congressional delegation.

From 2006 until recently, Congress has chosen not to fund the legally required USDA inspections of horses bound for slaughter. But last year Congress did fund the inspections in an agriculture spending bill signed by President Barack Obama.

With the barn door wide open, Rick De Los Santos, part-owner of Valley Meat Co., applied for USDA inspection of its meat processing plant so it can slaughter and process horses.

It's bad enough that more than 100,000 horses a year are bound for slaughterhouses in Mexico and Canada — and dinner tables in Europe and Asia — but it's distasteful to think about the possibility of little Susie's birthday pony being turned into taco meat right here in New Mexico.

And distressing to make it easier for deplorable situations to develop like the one at the Southwest Livestock Auction in Los Lunas where four horses were so emaciated and abused that three had to be put down and the fourth expired before it could be euthanized. The owner faces allegations of animal cruelty and neglect. But it's not his first rodeo with animal cruelty and neglect allegations. In 1991, authorities couldn't make 16 misdemeanor cruelty counts stick, mainly for lack of evidence — the horses were long gone.

The state Livestock Board and local prosecutors should ride such cruelty cases hard. And the USDA should make it clear: Americans don't eat Trigger.