

US should get out of the horse meat business

By Rep. Jim Moran (D-Va.) - 06/07/11 07:25 PM ET

Since 2006, horse slaughter has been banned in the U.S. In the annual agriculture appropriations bill, language with bipartisan support has been carried that eliminates federal funding for any activity involving the inspection of horse meat for human consumption. This restriction has effectively closed horse slaughter for human consumption facilities in the U.S. But this year the language was not included by the subcommittee for the first time in five years.

Last week, I introduced an amendment during full committee markup to restore the ban on horse slaughter in the U.S. The language was approved, but a floor fight on the issue looms in the near future. I hope to convince more of my colleagues of the need to continue to uphold current law making this inappropriate practice off-limits.

Horse slaughter is not humane. Horses are not raised in the U.S. for human consumption. Just like other animals, sick and old horses are not valued as a food source. The USDA estimates that more than 92 percent of horses sent to slaughter in the past were healthy and could have continued to be productive animals.

While horse meat is considered a delicacy in some countries, it is not in the U.S. There are moral implications for allowing a practice that upwards of nearly three-quarters of the American people oppose. Just because there is a market for horse meat in some countries does not mean the U.S. must be their supplier. There is a market for dog meat in some societies, too, and an overpopulation of them in the U.S. Should man's best friend face a similar fate? Of course not, and the same principle should hold true for horses.

Some will argue that the states should set and determine regulations for the inspection of horse meat. Anyone familiar with Upton Sinclair's famous work *The Jungle* knows the federal government has a long history of involvement in meat inspection - for good reason.

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