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State Officials, Humane Groups Oppose Proposed Horse Slaughter Plant in New Mexico

(April 13, 2012)—The Humane Society of the United States, the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), Front Range Equine Rescue and Animal Protection of New Mexico condemn plans to open a horse slaughter plant in Roswell, N.M.

The plans for the slaughterhouse were uncovered in an investigation by Front Range Equine Rescue, a Colorado-based equine rescue organization. The proposed facility would be operated by Valley Meat Co., LLC, a company in Roswell that has already applied with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service for inspection of the slaughter of equines for human consumption. According to Front Range's investigators, FSIS officials were scheduled to conduct a preliminary walk-through inspection of Valley Meat's facility last month. USDA temporarily suspended inspections of cattle slaughter at Valley Meat Co. in [February 2012](#) and November 2011 due to failure to comply with humane slaughter regulations.

"A horse slaughtering plant in Roswell is a terrible idea," said New Mexico Attorney General Gary King. "Such a practice, while not illegal, is certainly abhorrent to public sentiment, and I strongly suggest it be abandoned. I come from a ranching family but processing horses for food was never part of the plan for raising livestock. Horses are different and should be treated differently."

"As a veterinarian and someone who has had the great good fortune to grow up with and around horses, I am very saddened and angry about the recent revelations of mistreatment of horses in New Mexico," said New Mexico State Land Commissioner Ray Powell. "If a horse is hurt, terminally ill, or has no chance to find a loving home, then humane euthanasia is a realistic alternative. I am told New Mexico is entertaining the idea of a horse slaughtering facility in our state. Since we do not have the horses in New Mexico to make this economically viable, it means horses would be trucked in from surrounding states. This is a bad idea on every level, and I strongly oppose it. New Mexico can do much better by these intelligent and gentle creatures."

"Horse slaughter means tremendous suffering of horses, a proven history of environmental and waste violations, and allowing a toxic meat product to enter the human food chain," said Hilary Wood, president and founder of Front Range Equine Rescue. "Solutions to horse slaughter include stopping irresponsible breeding practices, more gelding and euthanasia assistance programs, re-homing and re-training options, and short-term owner assistance programs. Horse slaughter has no place in the U.S. or across our borders."

"American horses are our partners in sport, work and recreation—not dinner," said Keith Dane, director of equine protection for The HSUS. "The entire process of horse slaughter is filled with nonstop terror, pain and misery for horses, and it is proven to have a severe negative impact on surrounding communities. It would be irresponsible for the federal government to sign off on a predatory industry that has no regard for animal or human welfare."

“New Mexicans have a deep and enduring appreciation for horses, especially given their important role in our state’s rural way of life. It’s an affront to our citizens to suggest bringing the cruel, dangerous and polluting enterprise of horse slaughter to New Mexico as we celebrate our state’s centennial,” said Elisabeth Jennings, executive director of Animal Protection of New Mexico.

“The overwhelming majority of Americans are intensely opposed to this cruel practice, and as more people learn that we are allowing our horses to be shuttled off to gruesome deaths all for the sake of foreign gourmards, they are outraged, and opposition to this grisly practice is growing,” said Nancy Perry, senior vice president of ASPCA Government Relations. “Horse slaughter plants abuse more than just horses as they have proved economically and environmentally disastrous to communities in other states.”

In November 2011, Congress chose not to renew a ban on funding federal inspectors at horse slaughter plants in the United States, even though a similar provision has been part of the agriculture department’s spending bill for the past five years. That action opened the door for a return of horse slaughter to American soil, including taxpayer funded inspections of horse meat destined to be sent abroad, despite broad opposition in this country to the practice. A January 2012 poll commissioned by the ASPCA confirms that 80 percent of American voters oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

When the last three horse slaughter plants in the U.S. closed, the surrounding communities cheered. These communities had endured water pollution, an unending stench of rotting blood and offal, and a negative stigma that caused other businesses to leave the community. The slaughter plants employed no more than a few dozen employees in low-paying, dangerous, high-stress jobs. In their quest for higher profits, the foreign-owned companies did their best to avoid paying property taxes and the fines levied against them for environmental violations.

Additionally, it is unclear how Valley Meat Co. or the USDA would address the medications, vaccines and other substances that are routinely given to American horses and are known to be poisonous if consumed by humans. Earlier this year, The HSUS announced its intention to pursue legal action if the federal government failed to follow required protocols to ensure that food safety and environmental review requirements were observed.

Last month, The HSUS joined Front Range Equine Rescue in [filing a petition](#) with the Food and Drug Administration to declare the meat of former companion, show, and working animals to be unfit for human consumption due to the risk of the meat containing toxic residues. Last week, the two groups [filed a separate petition](#) with the USDA to ban the slaughter for human consumption of such animals for the same reasons.

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Media Contacts: HSUS - Stephanie Twining, 301-258-1491, stwining@humanesociety.org
ASPCA - Rebecca Goldrick, 646-291-4582, Rebecca.Goldrick@aspca.org
FRER - Hilary Wood, 719-481-1490, info@frontrangeequinerescue.org

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the Web at humanesociety.org.

About the ASPCA®

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation’s leading voice for animal welfare. More than one million supporters strong, the ASPCA’s mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, the ASPCA is a national leader in the areas of anti-cruelty, community outreach and animal health services. The ASPCA, which is headquartered in New York City, offers a wide range of programs, including a mobile clinic outreach initiative, its own humane law enforcement team, and a groundbreaking veterinary forensics team and mobile animal CSI unit. For more information, please visit www.aspca.org. To become a fan of the ASPCA on Facebook, go to www.facebook.com/aspca. To follow the ASPCA on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com/aspca.