



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES



**Front Range Equine Rescue**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Humane Groups Petition USDA to Block Companion, Working and Show Horses from Being Slaughtered for Human Consumption**

*Meat From Horses Not Raised For Food Presents Public Health Hazard*

WASHINGTON (April 9, 2012)—Front Range Equine Rescue and The Humane Society of the United States filed a legal petition with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to prevent former companion, working, competition and wild horses from being used as human food. The petition alleges that the drugs given to these horses throughout their lives are banned for animals used for food under federal law and/or are potentially dangerous to humans. Using these horses for human consumption creates an unacceptable and illegal public health threat under the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The groups sent a similar petition to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration last month.

Current USDA rules do not require sufficient testing or documentation to ensure that former companion and other non-livestock horses slaughtered for human food do not contain or have not been administered prohibited substances. The “killer-buyers” who acquire these horses typically have no concern or knowledge about the horses’ prior history before shipping them off to inhumane deaths in slaughter facilities. Unlike cows, pigs, chickens and other animals raised for food, horses are swept up by a predatory industry from a variety of sources—former race horses, carriage horses, family ponies and others who are routinely given drugs and medications not fit for human consumption.

“The slaughter of American horses for meat is a tragic and cruel end for horses and it is a grave threat to food safety,” said Hilary Wood, president of FRER. “Horses in our country are not raised as food animals. They are routinely treated with dozens of drugs which USDA knows are unsafe for human consumption. These iconic animals should never have their lifetime of service ended on a slaughterhouse kill floor.”

The petition requests that USDA certify all horses and horse meat from American horses as “Condemned” and thus unfit for human consumption. This action is especially timely, because 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 had been part of the agriculture department’s spending bill since 2006. Businesses looking to start up American horse slaughterhouses have been actively promoting horse meat, even though the animals were never intended to be food. These businesses and their misguided investors are proceeding despite their awareness that virtually every U.S. horse who ends up at slaughter has been exposed to a plethora of dangerous drugs, many of which are specifically outlawed for animals intended for food.

The USDA does not adequately regulate this flow of potentially toxic meat, despite the human health and animal welfare risks associated with it. The petition documents more than 110 examples of drugs and other substances which are or should be prohibited in food-producing horses, describes the horrible way in which horses die at slaughterhouses, and outlines the environmental devastation caused by horse slaughter plants in local communities.

Facts:

- More than 100,000 American horses are exported for slaughter each year, mainly for consumption in Europe and Asia.
- The slaughter pipeline is horribly cruel, with many of the horses suffering immensely during transport and the misguided and often repeated attempts to render them unconscious. USDA has documented the abuse and misery horses suffered at slaughterhouses in the U.S. before the last remaining plants closed in 2007.
- Virtually all the horses used for meat spend most of their lives as work, competition or sport horses, companion animals or wild horses.
- During their lives, horses who end up at slaughter are given a constant regimen of drugs and other substances which are either illegal for food animals, or are potentially dangerous to people who eat them.
- Under the current rules and regulations, there is no safeguard in place that can protect against the consumption of unsafe toxins in horse meat.
- Consumers do not know of the inherent dangers because there is no control over the drug residues.

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*Front Range Equine Rescue is a 501c3 non-profit working to end the abuse and neglect of horses through rescue and education. Since 1997, FREER has assisted thousands of horses through its rescue and educational programs. Many of FREER's rescued horses are obtained directly from livestock auctions and feed lots, which without FREER's intervention would have shipped to slaughter. Dedicated to the horses – On the web at [www.fronrangeequinerescue.org](http://www.fronrangeequinerescue.org)*

*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](http://humanesociety.org).*

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