

Testimony of:

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EWA<sup>i</sup> is a dues-free, all volunteer 501(c)(3) umbrella organization representing over 330 member equine organizations. EWA is dedicated to the improvement of equine welfare by performing research and investigations that uncover the true causal factors in equine abuse. This includes the study of systemic issues as well the investigation of individuals and businesses involved in abusive activities.

EWA is best known for tracking the number and characteristics of horses that fall into the slaughter pipeline<sup>ii</sup>. EWA has also done innumerable FOIA requests to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and various state agencies in the fulfillment of our mission.

EWA also tests the veracity of supposed findings of other organizations. Most surprising among these was an investigation that found that a report<sup>iii</sup> from the Government Accountability Office (GAO 11.228) had factually misrepresented state data in coming to its conclusion that the closing of domestic horse slaughter plants had produced a negative impact on equine welfare.

Prior to 2007, there were two horse slaughter plants operating in Texas and one operating in Illinois. The required USDA antemortem inspection of the horses included individual identifying markings and their breed. Race horses could be easily identified by the presence of their lip tattoos.

A 2005 FOIA request resulted in the EWA receiving slaughter data on the breed of horses that were slaughtered between January 2002 and January 2004. This is the most definitive of several sources of data which all roughly agree that at the time approximately 18% of slaughter horses were racing Thoroughbreds.

Last year saw 96,976 horses exported to slaughter primarily in Mexico and Canada. All else being equal, this would provide an estimate of just over 17,000 thoroughbreds being slaughtered per year.

In 2007, all three US plants were closed by the budgetary elimination of funding for the required antemortem inspections. Therefore, precise breed data has not been available since that period. However, the EWA estimates that the slaughter of racing thoroughbreds remains little diminished. Despite the closure of the domestic plants, slaughter totals did not change significantly, as horses were merely exported for slaughter.

Prior to the mid-2000's, slaughter at racing tracks was very much an open secret. Kill buyers, known to all at the tracks, were a constant presence on shed row, waiting to pick up the latest losers and the injured. As the industry strove to prevent the PR disaster this could represent, this presence quickly disappeared.

In 2014, the European Union banned horse meat from Mexico, but Canada continued to slaughter American race horses, despite published evidence<sup>iv</sup> that showed they were almost universally given banned substances such as phenylbutazone.

Eventually the EU cracked down on Canada as well, and so the race horses began flowing to Mexico where the slaughter plants had found new customers in countries such as Russia and Vietnam.

We continue to see thoroughbreds in the loads of horses going to slaughter, especially to Mexico. The racing industry has made some efforts to address the issue of their horses being slaughtered. However, the nature of the problem and the character of the slaughter industry make the problem all but completely intractable.

The first reason for this intractability is that the entire horse slaughter supply system is rife with criminal misbehavior and fraud, and has proven to be very adaptable in resisting any kind of regulation. EWA investigators have documented a huge variety of illegal activity.

Our investigations have demonstrated the astounding breadth of some of this activity. In one example, in 2014 kill buyer Dorian Ayache of Three Angels Farm in

Tennessee, pled guilty to a fraction of the DOT violations of which EWA and others had provided evidence. When his DOT license was suspended, he merely began operating the same condemned fleet under the name and license of a neighboring farm. Two of his trailers actually broke open on the highway, spilling animals, including horses, to the pavement.

In another, very recent example, EWA investigators worked with a paralegal in Georgia to investigate claims by horse owners that a "rescue" had taken their horses and then they had disappeared. The investigation culminated in the arrest of an Alabama veterinary student<sup>v</sup>, running a supposed equine rescue, on charges of fraud. She is charged with selling the horses to slaughter.

The second factor making this problem intractable is the fact that the industry produces more than 20,000 foals per year. Many will never race, and of those that do, few will have a career more than three to five years long. Since the life expectancy of a horse is approximately 30 years, this means that thoroughbreds create a future need for over half a million care-years every year.

The result of this pressure is inevitable, and no modest after-care effort will begin to address it. Moreover, thoroughbreds are not trained in any way that is compatible with most probable future employment and many require considerable retraining.

As a result, we believe that the problem is beyond the reach of the industry to address, even with the most sincere effort.

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