



## Fast Facts on Horse Slaughter in Canada

### About the Slaughter

- In 2009, more than 93,000 horses were slaughtered in Canada—that's nearly 1800 horses killed each week.
- Many were young healthy horses that were sold at auction to the highest bidder - a "killer buyer" working for a slaughterhouse. In fact, over 50% of horses sold at rural auctions go to slaughter.
- Horses are an extreme example of a flight animal. The panic and instinctive desire to escape they experience in the slaughterhouse causes them to thrash their heads frantically in the kill chute, making it difficult to effectively stun them prior to slaughter. As a result, many horses receive several sharp blows before they are rendered unconscious.
- Current transport regulations are poor, allowing for horses to be transported for up to 36 hours without food, water or rest. Horses are often crammed in trailers (sometimes double-deckers) designed for shorter animals like cows and pigs, and travel in uncomfortable positions over very long distances.
- There have been many documented cases of cruelty and neglect in Canadian slaughterhouses. The organization Veterinarians for Equine Welfare denounces the practice of horse slaughter as inhumane and unnecessary.
- In 2007, horse slaughter ended in the United States. But the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act has not yet been passed (which would prohibit the sale, transport and slaughter of horses for human consumption). As a result, there was a 49% increase in horse imports for slaughter to Canada from the US in 2007.
- In 2006, there were 3 plants in Canada - 2 in Quebec and one in Alberta. There are seven now - 2 in Quebec, 2 in Alberta, one in BC, one in Saskatchewan and one in Ontario.

### What the Public Thinks

- An Ipsos-Reid poll conducted in May 2004 revealed that 64% of Canadians oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption.
- A Public Opinion Strategies poll conducted in 2006 found that 69% of Americans are against killing horses for human consumption.

### Economics of the Slaughter

- The Canadian horsemeat industry had been in decline in recent years. Canada's horsemeat exports were valued at \$63.6 million in 2003. In 2004, that number went down to \$61.7 million. And in 2005, it fell to \$60 million.
- With the increase of Canadian imports of horses bound for slaughter (following the closure of the last US horse slaughter plant in 2007) the Canadian horse meat industry stopped its decline. In 2007, the industry produced nearly \$70 million worth of horsemeat, an increase of 20 per cent over 2006. Once the US bans the transport of horses for slaughter, the Canadian horsemeat industry will likely resume its decline.