



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The HSUS Applauds Introduction of The Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act
Landrieu, Ensign Introduce Legislation to Stop Horse Slaughter Today**

(March 26, 2009)—The Humane Society of the United States applauds U.S. Sens. Mary Landrieu, D-La., and John Ensign, R-Nev., for reintroducing legislation today that would stop Mexico and Canada from killing and butchering tens of thousands of healthy American horses and prohibit the slaughter of American horses in the United States for sale to European and Asian countries. The passage of this critical legislation--The Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act-- is a top priority for The HSUS and other animal welfare and equine rescue organizations, veterinarians and horse industry groups.

Original cosponsors of this legislation include Senators Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., Benjamin Cardin, D-Md., Thomas Carper, D-Del., Susan Collins, R-Maine, Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., John Kerry, D-Mass., Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., Carl Levin, D-Mich., Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., John McCain, R-Ariz., and Robert Menendez, D-N.J.

"This bill could finally take American horses off the menu for good, and put an end to the disrespectful and inhumane treatment of a class of animals that have helped to shape and build American culture," said Wayne Pacelle, The HSUS' president and CEO. "The opponents of this legislation take a miserly and selfish attitude toward these creatures, and we can certainly do better than to ship horses hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles, in unbearable conditions to slaughter plants in Mexico and Canada."

State legislatures have acted to stop horse slaughter, shuttering the last remaining foreign-owned horse slaughter plants in the United States in 2007, and federal courts have upheld those state laws. But Congress has failed to act to stop the export of live horses to Canada and Mexico for slaughter, which is still occurring. More than 86,000 horses were sent across U.S. borders to slaughter in Canada or Mexico in 2008, surpassing the number of exports to date in 2007.

"America's horses are being beaten and dragged across the border into Mexico and Canada so that they can be inhumanely slaughtered for food. I will continue to fight in Congress to end this brutal practice and ensure that American horses will no longer be savagely slaughtered for human consumption," Sen. Landrieu said.

"The time to put an end to the practice of slaughtering horses in America is long overdue," Sen. Ensign said. "Horses have an important role in the history of our country, particularly the West, and they deserve our protection. As a senator and a veterinarian, I am committed to doing what I can for these magnificent animals." Sen. Ensign is the only veterinarian serving in the U.S. Senate.

In January, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., introduced the House version of the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act, H.R. 503. Past congressional actions on horse slaughter have demonstrated a strong, bipartisan desire to prohibit the killing of horses for human consumption. In the 109th Congress, legislation to stop horse slaughter passed the Senate by a more than two-to-one margin and passed the House numerous times by a margin of more than 100 votes. But in the 110th Congress, prior legislation, H.R. 503, introduced by Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Ed Whitfield, R-Ky., Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., and John Spratt, D-S.C, and S. 311, introduced by Sens. Landrieu and Ensign, was not enacted because it was blocked by House committee leaders and Western senators. Animal advocates hope the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act will advance quickly in the House and Senate in the 111th Congress.

Butchering horses is a particularly cruel end for these loyal and trusting creatures. The HSUS documented the cruelty and abuse when investigators followed "killer buyers" who transport horses thousands of miles from auctions to feedlots to interstate highways. The HSUS also documented a barbaric method of slaughter on a kill floor in Juarez, Mexico, in which thousands of horses were, and still are, stabbed with short knives, leaving them paralyzed and unable to breathe. Horses may still be conscious when they are hoisted up by a chain and when their throats are slit. Recent documentation uncovered by horse welfare advocates demonstrates that the U.S. plants were equally inhumane and riddled with gross abuse. There is no humane way to slaughter horses for food and no reason to prop up this ailing and unpopular industry.

The HSUS is joined by members of Congress, the National Show Horse Registry, American Horse Defense Fund, Veterinarians for Equine Welfare, United States Equine Sanctuary & Rescue and more than 500 endorsing organizations along with the majority of Americans in support of a ban on the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

Timeline:

- September 2008 – House Judiciary Committee passes H.R. 6598 by voice vote after majority reject multiple poison pill amendments.
- July 2008 – Conyers and Burton introduce H.R. 6598, legislation amending Title 18 to prohibit horse slaughter for human consumption as a form of equine cruelty.
- September 2007 - A three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit unanimously upholds the Illinois state law banning the slaughter of horses for human consumption in that state.
- May 2007 – Illinois governor signs H.B. 1711, banning horse slaughter in Illinois.
- May 2007 – The U.S. Supreme Court announces that it denies to consider an appeal of the lower court decision upholding Texas' ban on the sale of horsemeat for human consumption.
- April 2007 – The U.S. House of Representatives passes H.R. 249 to restore a decades-old ban on the commercial sale and slaughter of wild horses first enacted under the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. House vote: 277-137
- April 2007 – The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee votes 15-7 to approve S. 311 to ban horse slaughter and exports of horses for slaughter.
- March 2007 - A federal district court orders the U.S. Department of Agriculture to stop inspecting horsemeat at the Cavel International slaughter plant, effectively closing the last operating horse slaughtering operation in the United States.
- March 2007 – The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit affirms a decision upholding a Texas state law banning the sale of horsemeat for human consumption.

- September 2006 – The U.S. House of Representatives passes H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. The 109th Congress adjourns before the Senate can consider the bill. House vote: 263-146
- September 2005 – The U.S. Senate approves the Ensign-Byrd Amendment to the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill to prohibit the use of tax dollars to pay for inspections of horsemeat. Senate vote: 69-28
- June 2005 – The U.S. House of Representatives approves the Sweeney-Spratt-Rahall-Whitfield Amendment to the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill to prohibit the use of tax dollars to pay for inspections of horsemeat. House vote: 269-158
- May 2005 – The U.S. House of Representatives approves the Rahall-Whitfield Amendment to the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations Bill to restore federal protections from commercial sale and slaughter to wild horses and burros. House vote: 249-159. The provision is stripped in conference from the final bill.

Video footage from The HSUS' horse slaughter investigations is at video@hsus.org.

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Media Contact: Pepper Ballard: 240-751-0232; pballard@humanesociety.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.