

From Animal Law Coalition

<http://www.animallawcoalition.com/horse-slaughter/article/645>

Inside the Life of a Horse Rescuer

Posted Jan 3, 2009 by lauraallen

o Horse Slaughter



by Shirley Puga

Ring! Ring! I grab the phone. There are more horses in peril... This time a mare and 4 one-month old foals are at risk. Only one foal is hers. The other three were orphaned when their mothers were shipped to a horse slaughtering facility in Canada. The young mare takes the orphans under her wing, and allows all four to nurse and bond with her. She protects them, as they await their uncertain fate...

I wish this sad, sweet story were an isolated incident, but unfortunately it is not. Every year 100,000 of our beloved horses are slaughtered to satisfy diners in Belgium, France, and Japan.

Many dedicated individuals and organizations have worked diligently for 7 years to pass legislation to bring this practice to an end. Since January 2008, The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act has languished in the House (H.R. 503) and Senate (S.311). Previously, similar legislation passed by a large margin in the House, but was stalled, and eventually died, in the Senate.

I am committed to ending horse slaughter. While I actively participate in that campaign, I simultaneously work to keep as many horses as possible from that fate.

Since April 2006, I have facilitated the rescue of over 500 slaughter-bound horses. These horses were not old, sick, lame, insane or dangerous. In fact, there were pregnant mares,

orphan foals, weanlings, yearlings, teenage ranch horses, riding school/camp horses, wild horses, race horses and draft horses. There were even a few donkeys, mules and ponies. A wide variety of shapes sizes, and colors, all with plenty of life to live. Yet, they were all on their way to a slaughter house.

Once pulled from the slaughter pipeline, these horses were given a second chance, and placed in rescues throughout the West. There they were quarantined, and later evaluated for health, soundness, temperament and training. When they were ready, they were matched with suitable adopters and placed in new homes.

Approx 10%, or 50, of the rescued horses were pregnant at the time of their rescue. They were carefully fed and nurtured, and later gave birth to healthy foals.

So, why does the horse slaughter industry exist?

Some say we need horse slaughter plants to dispose of old, sick, or injured animals. That is not, however, the type horses that are being sold for their meat. The 500+ horses I've rescued are a cross-section of the population that is going to slaughter. They are primarily young, healthy, vibrant animals.

Americans do not eat horsemeat, nor is it used in our pet food. We do not raise horses as food animals. In fact, horses routinely have drugs in their systems that are prohibited in food animals, drugs that are known toxins and carcinogens (steroids, bute, wormers, fly sprays, etc).

Horse slaughter is a lucrative business, that until recently, has been America's "dirty little secret." Kill buyers obtain horses at auction, often outbidding people that would provide homes. They also scan the "free to good home" ads and assure folks that their horse will go to a nice family, riding facility, etc. Horses are accumulated on feedlots and then crammed into double deck trailers (designed for cattle) to make a long trip, often 24-36 hours without food or water, to a slaughter plant. The slaughter process was also designed for cattle, and is highly inappropriate and inhumane for horses, which are more sensitive, flightier animals.



Horse slaughter houses are owned and operated by foreign companies and the meat is shipped overseas for human consumption. Save a handful of jobs, there is no benefit to having these slaughter facilities on U.S. soil. Until 2007, there

were three plants (one in IL, two in TX) that collectively slaughtered 100,000 horses/year. Now that they have been closed by state laws, our horses are trucked to Canada and Mexico to be processed for their meat. Only Federal legislation will end the slaughter, and transport to slaughter, of American horses.

Fortunately, promising new legislation has been presented. H.R. 6598, The Conyers-Burton Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2008, will ultimately bring horse slaughter to an end. Please ask your legislators to support it.

Back to our rescue story...

The funds were raised to procure the mare and 4 foals from the kill buyer, and they were transported to a very special horse rescue. Pregnant Mare Rescue in Aptos, CA took in the entire "family" unit. The foals will be on milk replacer, and the young mare (who is a bit thin), will be on supplements to boost her nutritionally and also to help her maintain/add weight. The costs to support this little group will be a substantial drain on this small, non profit rescue. To help them with on-going expenses, or to donate much needed supplies (foal halters, milk replacer, hay, grain, etc), please go to www.pregnantmarerescue.com. Be sure to watch their website for updates on the mare and foals!

To inquire about my rescue efforts, send an email to: equineangel22@yahoo.com