

Blog post from ahorseslife.org:

Horse Slaughter: NOT a Necessary Evil

In 2006, approximately **105,000 horses were slaughtered in the United States**. Some of the meat was used by zoos to feed large carnivores, but the vast majority of it (42 million dollars' worth) was sold to Europe and Japan for human consumption.

However, because all horse slaughter took place at only three plants (two in Texas and one in Illinois, all Belgian-owned), most Americans were unaware that it was happening until proposed legislation in 2006 made the issue public.

In 2007, court rulings shut down all three plants, effectively ending horse slaughter in the United States.

I believe that, in the long run, this will be a good thing. But it was NOT the simple, magical solution that many proponents were hoping for. For many decades, slaughter provided an easy, convenient disposal system for tens of thousands of "extra" horses, and those extra horses aren't going to disappear overnight.

In an ideal world, owners who no longer had the option of sending those horses to slaughter would keep them and care for them instead, or humanely euthanize them. But obviously we don't live in an ideal world. I don't doubt that some people have indeed stepped up and taken responsibility, but many others have shipped horses off to slaughter in Mexico and Canada, sent them to over-crowded rescues and humane societies, given them away to people who have neither the money nor skill to adequately care for them, or simply abandoned the horses to fend for themselves (and die of starvation).

And, of course, the problem has been made worse by the bad economy and abysmal horse market. When healthy, well-bred, well-trained horses are selling for a few hundred dollars, very few people are willing to sink time and money into an old broodmare from a failed breeding program or a young racehorse that was injured on the track.

Slaughter did indeed provide an outlet unwanted horses– but it also encouraged the production of those same horses. It wasn't a cure, it was a Band-Aid. **If we weren't breeding 100,000 "extra" horses every year, we wouldn't need slaughter to dispose of them.**

Although I agree with the pro-slaughter advocates who claim that slaughter in the United States is much more humane than in some other countries, our horses deserve better than to be loaded onto a crowded trailer with strange horses, shipped to a feedlot, chased into a chute and killed with a bolt through the head. And this is particularly true of horses that served the purpose they were bred for, whether they were racehorses, work horses or pleasure horses, and simply outlived their usefulness. Sending an old or injured horse to slaughter (even indirectly, by sending it to an auction) instead of having it humanely euthanized is the epitome of selfishness and cowardice.

To fix the slaughter problem, we have to fix the unwanted horse problem. And to fix the unwanted horse problem, we have to go to the source– the breeders. The people who produce horses MUST start taking responsibility for those horses, and I don't believe many of them will do so as long as slaughter gives them an easy out.

If you want to learn more about the horse slaughter issue, here are some good resources:

[Horse Slaughter Statistics: 1989 to Present](#) (Animal Welfare Institute)

[Horses Spared in U.S. Face Death Across the Border](#) (NY Times)

[Surge in Abandoned Horses Renews Debate Over Slaughterhouses](#) (NY Times)

[Slaughter article archives at TheHorse.com](#)

[Horses to the Slaughter](#) (Salon.com)

[The Slaughter Debate: A Two-Sided Issue](#) (Horse & Rider magazine)