

VETERINARIANS WHO OPPOSE H.R. 503
A BAN ON HORSE SLAUGHTER
A REFUTATION

Certain veterinarians, who do not represent the majority of the approximately 8000¹ equine practitioners in this country, have lobbied and continue to lobby against any legislation that would ban horse slaughter.

They cite various arguments to support their stand on this issue. The following is a refutation of the most salient of these:

Argument 1: The banning of horse slaughter would result in an increase of abuse and neglect.

Domestic horse slaughter has declined steadily since 1990² when a total of 345,700 horses were slaughtered. Since that time, all ten domestically owned slaughterhouses have closed. There is no documented rise in abuse; quite the contrary, horse abuse and neglect has decreased in those states where horses slaughter plants have shut down.

Argument 2: H.R. 503 does not address the welfare of horses should slaughter be banned.

The sole intention of H.R. 503 is to ban horse slaughter and live export for slaughter. This bill is not intended to be a panacea for all ills affecting our equines. It specifically prohibits the slaughter of our nation's equines, and therefore all the cruelties and abuses inherent to it. On the contrary, passage of this legislation would significantly raise the standard of equine welfare to an all-time high in this country.

Argument 3: There are not enough rescues and shelters to absorb the thousands of so-called "unwanted" horses who would remain in our communities if horse slaughter was banned.

In the AAEP's Position regarding H.R. 857³, it was stated that there would be 200,000 'unwanted' horses if H.R. 857 had passed. This year, the AAEP states in their Position regarding H.R. 503⁴ that there will be 80,000 'unwanted' horses. That is a differential of 120,000 horses. Furthermore, the AAEP states in their position paper that: 'Currently, there is a lack of information regarding the total number of unwanted horses in the U.S.'⁵ Without proper substantiation supporting the AAEP's claims, this argument is invalid as it cannot be verified.

Argument 4: Where would all the horses go?

USDA reported that in 2004, the 65,976 domestically slaughtered horses were below the average age of nine. Young horses will always find a home with an amateur

¹ AAEP.org Mission Statement

² USDA-Nass Database –figures analyzed from 1985 to present

³ AAEP Position Regarding H.R. 857

⁴ AAEP Position Regarding H.R. 503

⁵ AAEP Position regarding H.R. 503

**VETERINARIANS WHO OPPOSE H.R. 503
A BAN ON HORSE SLAUGHTER
A REFUTATION**

owner who rides for pleasure or competition, therapeutic riding programs, private riding stables, and Mounted Police Forces across the United States.

Argument 5: Veterinarians would become overwhelmed with requests to euthanize horses if horse slaughter was banned, requiring disposal of thousands of large animal carcasses which we do not have the capacity for.

There are currently 6.6 million horses in the United States⁶. Even if it were the case that the 65,976 domestically slaughtered horses would have required euthanization, this number represents 0.98% of the total horse population in the United States. Funerary options available to horse owners include cremation, burial, composting, landfills, and rendering.

Argument 6: The captive bolt is a form of euthanasia.

AAEP has adopted the position of the American Veterinary Association with regards to the use of the Captive bolt as a form of 'humane equine euthanasia.' Upon analysis of the **2000 Report of the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia**⁷, this position has been refuted. The use of the captive bolt gun does not meet the AVMA Panel's criteria regarding "loss of consciousness and death without causing pain, distress, anxiety, or apprehension."

Unlike bovines (which the captive bolt was designed for) equids are flight animals and attempt to flee the 'knock box' or 'kill chute.' It therefore takes numerous attempts before the animal is properly stunned, if at all. In undercover videos taken by the Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Farming Association it is clear that these equids are feeling pain due to the number of attempts taken to stun them, and are extremely distressed, anxious, and apprehensive.

This invalidates criteria 1, 2, 3, 6, and 10 of the AVMA's criterion for 'humane euthanasia.'

As the abuse in slaughterhouse practices has been exposed over recent years, it began to be stated that the animals are stunned to make it more humane and this has now become a popular theory. In actuality it is to increase production and protect the abattoir workers from the thrashing of panicked animals. It is not and never has been meant to be a form of killing, and certainly not a form of euthanasia.⁸

End.

**© THE FUND FOR HORSES
MANES AND TAILS ORGANIZATION**

June 3, 2005

⁶ 'California and the Unwanted Horse' from the AAEP 2005 Summit on the Unwanted Horse

⁷ 2000 Report of the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia

⁸ Statement by Dr. Lester Friedlander, DVM and former USDA Inspector, June 1, 2005.