

## Underlying issue

In the United States, horses slaughtered for meat come mainly from auctions, where they are sold by private sellers and breeders.

According to a study commissioned by USDA/APHIS<sup>[11]</sup> when horses were still being slaughtered in the U.S., 92% of American horses being slaughtered at US plants studied were in good health<sup>[13]</sup>. Rarely are these horses sick and injured,<sup>[14]</sup> as those horses have trouble withstanding the long, crowded transportation conditions to slaughter plants. Most horses bound for slaughter are brought to the [slaughterhouses](#) by contract buyers, also known as *kill buyers*, who drive around the country buying horses at auction.

About 90% of the horsemeat is exported for human consumption overseas, where it sells for approximately the same price as veal.<sup>[15]</sup> The rest goes to zoos. Horsemeat was outlawed in pet food in the 1970s.

Slaughter of horses is opposed by the vast majority of Americans, as shown in multiple professionally conducted surveys.<sup>[16]</sup> Horses are widely perceived as [companion animals](#) like cats and dogs, or deserving of humane consideration because of their roles serving Americans as working animals and for sport - and because they are not bred or raised for food in the U.S.

American horse meat raises a number of potential health concerns, mainly due to the routine usage of medications in horses banned in food animals, and the lack of tracking of this usage in horses. Unlike livestock raised for food, where all potential medications are tested for withdrawal times; approved

or banned for usage, and vigilantly tracked for each animal, there is no way to guarantee which medications have or have not been used in a particular horse.

In fact, The European Commission Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) found serious violations during inspections conducted in November and December 2010 of EU regulated plants in Mexico slaughtering horses for human consumption.<sup>[17]</sup> Most American horses destined for slaughter end up at EU regulated plants in Mexico and Canada. Horses, unlike traditional food animals in the United States, are not raised or medicated during their lifetime with the intent of one day becoming human food. Because American horses are not "intended" for the human food chain, throughout their lives they will often have received medications that are banned by the FDA for use at any time during the life of food animals.<sup>[18]</sup> There is also a concern that horse meat will be mixed in with ground beef products in the United States like it has been in Europe. After tests showed that products labeled 100% beef actually contained horse meat, Tesco, Nestle, Ikea and other major companies had to pull food from stores in 14 different countries.<sup>[19]</sup> According to horsemeat dealers, the meat has a lower cholesterol content than American beef, and high iron content, low fat content,<sup>[20][21][22]</sup> even suggested as red meat for people with heart problems.<sup>[23][24]</sup>

Most Americans oppose the slaughtering of horses for meat consumption.<sup>[25][26]</sup> According to polls, in [New York](#), 64% of people polled believed that slaughtering horses for meat was illegal, while in [Indiana](#), 91% believe that horse slaughter should be banned.<sup>[27]</sup> In [Texas](#) 89% of voters are unaware that horse slaughter was then going on in their own state.<sup>[28]</sup> In 2013, the [Obama](#) administration proposed a move to remove funding for US Department of Agriculture inspections of horse slaughter plants in the 2014 financial year.<sup>[29]</sup>