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Contact: Marnie Somers, Chair
Membership & Communications
Box 1122, Carberry, MB R0K 0H0
Telephone: (204) 834-2479
Fax: (204) 834-3999
membership-media@cqha.ca

www.cqha.ca

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AQHA
MEMBERS



AQHA News Bits

Unsafe Consequences



As we all know, horse processing in the United States is not a black and white issue, so I want to take this week's 440 to update you on the latest information. Once again, the Safeguard America Food Exports Act is before Congress. The act is being positioned as a food-safety effort to protect humans from eating horse meat that is not raised for human consumption. In fact, the act, if approved, would ban the exportation of unwanted horses to processing facilities in Canada or Mexico. The ban would mean that thousands of unwanted horses will be sentenced to a destiny of starvation, abuse and neglect. It's a hellish demise.

Here are the facts about unwanted horses in the United States:

- The Government Accountability Office reported that about 138,000 unwanted horses were transported to processing facilities in 2010.
- The United States Department of Agriculture reports that 144,000 horses were transported to processing facilities in 2014.
- USDA reports that there are nearly 50,000 wild horses and burros on Bureau of Land Management land, which is 22,500 more than what that land can naturally support.
- USDA also reports that there are more than 47,000 wild horses and burros in short- and long-term holding facilities.
- The cost of the wild horse and burro program - \$77,245,000 in fiscal year 2014 - is coming out of U.S. taxpayers' pockets.

Although rescue facilities have made noble attempts to adopt and care for a small percentage of these

unwanted horses, the American Veterinary Medical Association reports that those rescue facilities are underfunded and bursting at the seams of their capacity. There are also more and more reported occurrences of unintended abuse and neglect in these facilities across the country.

AQHA has a long-standing history of protecting the horse by suspending members for animal cruelty charges and judicial confiscations of neglected horses. Unfortunately, that number has increased during the last two years. Most of these people, while well-meaning in their efforts to care for unwanted horses, became either financially or physically unable to care for the animals in their possession. This is a snap-shot view of the unintended consequences from the current horse-processing ban in the United States. Like I said, there is plenty of gray area when it comes to what is truly best for unwanted horses.

When looking at dollars and cents, the Unwanted Horse Coalition estimates it costs \$2,300 per year to provide basic care - vaccinations, feed and basic farrier services - for an unwanted horse. And that doesn't account for horses with special medical needs, such as soundness issues. That's approaching \$350 million annually in basic care costs to take care of the number of unwanted horses being exported for processing, should the SAFE Act pass. Who will provide funding to care for these horses? The federal government is tapped out. And as I pointed out earlier, the private sector - though well-meaning - has proved incapable of such a commitment, as well.

AQHA believes that as property owners, we have the right to make end-of-life decisions for our horses - our property. Aside from humane end-of-life options, AQHA endorses still-usable horses being donated to college or therapeutic riding programs. However, we recognize that there are horses that are not suited for continued use by anyone. That is why we oppose abolishing the option of horse processing until there are other provisions made to take care of the more than 140,000 unwanted horses that meet that end each year.

While we wish it could be true, AQHA disagrees with the notion that all of God's animals - in this case, horses - can be cared for by human hands, live out the rest of their lives in plush pastures and die at a ripe, old age. It's just not realistic. Legislators, as well as the Humane Society of the United States, have failed to recognize *or* choose to ignore the facts by introducing the SAFE Act, which will only increase the number of unwanted horses.

If we do not like unwanted horses being sent to processing facilities across our northern and southern borders, then perhaps Congress should allow our own USDA-regulated processing plants to reopen. The U.S. plants, with state-of-the-art monitoring technology, will assure humane handling and euthanasia as approved by AAEP and AVMA, and a USDA-inspected safe and wholesome end product for export.

It goes without saying that AQHA members love the horse and what it stands for. We are sickened by the thought that hundreds of thousands of horses will meet a tragic and inhumane end of life under this legislation, should it see the light of day.

AQHA board members, this is a call to action. I urge you to contact your elected representatives in Washington, D.C., and explain to them the dire consequences of this legislation. Visit www.unitedstatescongress.gov/members to find your representatives.

What's being called the "**SAFE Act**" has profoundly unsafe consequences for our beloved horse.

As we celebrate the Fourth of July weekend with family and friends, I am reminded that this holiday weekend is not only about picnics, parades and fireworks. July 4th celebrates the birth of American independence, and because of our freedom, we have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, including our horse.



Craig P. Huffhines

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The mandate of the CQHA, a national affiliate of the AQHA, is to address issues of concern to Canadian owners of American Quarter Horses; to be a communications vehicle for and with Canadian owners of American Quarter Horses; and to promote and market, both globally and within Canada, Canadian-bred and/or Canadian-owned American Quarter Horses.

*The Canadian Quarter Horse Association is an Affiliate of the AQHA. Annual membership is **FREE** to current AQHA members. For more information, or to enroll as a member on-line, visit our newly updated [CQHA website](#)*



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