

# The Fundamental Truth of Animal Agriculture:

*why it is so important to defeat efforts to criminalize consumption of horse meat;  
and why it is so important to re-establish horse processing facilities in the United States.*

## An Informational Position Paper

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### *Introduction*

Private property as a central institution of European civil law started with the Roman law of Justinian, and the English common-law tradition that started with the Norman Conquest. The protection of private property from the Crown was a major purpose of the Magna Carta as early as 1215. Centuries later, the key writers who set the intellectual framework for our Constitution—John Locke, David Hume, William Blackstone, Adam Smith, and James Madison—all treated private property as a bulwark of the individual against the arbitrary power of the state.

Our founding fathers had a keen appreciation of the central role of private property in social life. Just as a strong view of the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion is necessary to serve fundamental constitutional values, so, too, is a strong view of private property in a free and democratic society.

The institution of private property is as old as civilization itself. The exclusive possession, use, and disposition of property have long been recognized as forming the core that lies at the center of organized social life. Its social importance helps explain why private property has been so vital to the organization of every legal system. Traditional legal thinkers in both the Roman law and common-law tradition constantly insisted on this key proposition: “property is the guardian of every other right.” The logic that drives this expression is that only a system of private property lets people form and raise

families, organize religious and other charitable organizations, and earn a living through honest labor. (Epstein, 2008)

Private property rights include exclusive rights of possession, use, and disposition, and our legal system includes effective systems to record title and to transfer ownership. No one disputes that all domestic animals are private property.

**And yet there are now bills introduced in both the US Senate and House of Representatives that would make it a felony to possess, ship, transport, purchase, sell, deliver, or receive, in interstate commerce or foreign commerce, any horse with the intent that it is to be slaughtered for human consumption. To use a horse for food would become a felony crime commensurate with aggravated assault and battery, arson, burglary, illegal drug sales, embezzlement, grand theft, tax evasion, treason, espionage, racketeering, robbery, murder, rape, kidnapping and fraud.**

These bills represent an arrogant cultural bigotry that should never be contemplated in polite society, much less received a second's consideration by any elected official. The United States slaughters and exports beef, pork, and chicken, all of which is killed humanely under regulated inspection, but horse meat—which is consumed by the majority of world cultures including our closest neighbors in Canada, Iceland, Mexico, and South America; which appears on the menus of the finest restaurants in Europe; and which is purveyed in grocery stores right alongside the other meats all over Asia and Polynesia—would be a felony for Americans. Horse meat was widely consumed in the United States and Britain until the late 1940s.<sup>1</sup> In some regions horse meat can still be found in small, specialty shops and ethnic markets today. It is prized by many of the ethnic populations who have immigrated to the United States.

This would represent the first time that the consumption of **ANY** domestic animal is prohibited in the United States. If it can be legally established that the regulated slaughter of horses is in and of itself inherently cruel and inhumane—then it is also true that the regulated slaughter of cows, pigs, and chickens is also cruel and inhumane. There is nothing that makes horses different than any other livestock animal. Thus the legal precedent would be set to make it a felony to consume the flesh of any animal.

This would be the first time that Americans are prohibited from consuming any food item based on purely social and political reasons. The first time that the US Congress has contemplated the audacity of trying to influence or change the culinary traditions and food practices of other nations.

Even though US horse owners would be criminalized for accessing a world market, that market would not stop eating horses, they will simply turn elsewhere for the meat they seek to import.

It would deprive American horse owners access to a market, and deprive them of their property rights without compensation—which is blatantly unconstitutional under the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, if it wasn't for horse meat the troops in World War II would have gone hungry. One little known fact is that the government as part of the New Deal during the Great Depression forced ranchers to sell beef for \$1 per head, dug huge pits, drove the cattle in and killed them and then covered them with lye so that no one could use the meat in a misguided effort to raise the price. The problem wasn't that there was too much beef. The problem was that the economy was ruined and nobody had money to buy food. Lessons we should be mindful of considering current events.

Because so few people are actually involved in the business of animal agriculture in the United States, less than 1% of the population, and because these few people produce the highest quality protein, and the most nutrient dense food stuff available, it is imperative that policy makers have at least some understanding of how the business actually works. The environment surrounding this debate is full of passionate rhetoric, graphic images presented out of context, half-truths, untruths, and manipulated sound bites. This paper seeks to counter this with clear descriptions and factual information about the implications and impacts of these efforts.

### *The Basics of Animal Agriculture*

The first thing to understand is that everything that human beings consume as solid food, except for a single mineral, salt, is a living thing. What you put into your mouth, whether that is a piece of meat, or a fresh-pulled carrot out of your garden, interrupts the life cycle of a living thing. The business of agriculture is to produce food.

The second thing to understand is that human beings, in order to thrive and be healthy need both plant and animal foods. A purely vegan diet that contains no animal derived products of any kind—spells death for the human species. More than 85% of a human’s brain develops in the first three years of life, and a vegan diet for either a child or a nursing mother does not provide the necessary nutrients for proper development. (Planck, *Vegan Babies at Risk*, 2007) People deprived of animal products die slow, painful deaths of malnutrition, vitamin and protein deficiencies, and grow up with weak, fragile bones and systems vulnerable to disease. (Planck, *Real Food: What to Eat and Why*, 2007) While no human society on earth is completely vegan—those multi-generational vegetarian societies that come the closest in India and Asia have the frailest, least robust bodies and the shortest life spans known to mankind. (Jarvis, 1997)

You don’t need to be a physician, a nutritionist, or even have a fancy degree to understand why humans eat meat. Just check the teeth in your mouth. There are twenty of them devoted to eating meat, but only twelve for fruit and vegetables. As Dr. Max Ernest Jutte, MD, points out, “the stomach is a carnivorous organ designed primarily to digest lean meat, and the small intestine, pancreas, and liver are mainly herbivorous and designed to digest vegetables, fruits, fats, and farinaceous (starch) foods.” (Jutte, 2004) Most obvious of all, we’ve got eyes in the front of our heads to see and hunt, rather than eyes on the sides of our heads to see in all directions like most herbivorous prey animals. Human beings are designed to eat meat.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than try to transform Americans into vegan purists obsessed with food, which according to even the experts, is the only way you can be a vegan and preserve any semblance of health—wouldn’t it make more sense to eat what humans have eaten for thousands of years? Eat real food. Eat some meat and lots of plants. Don’t eat anything your great grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food. Stay away from the middle of the grocery store—do your shopping around the edges where you find the meat, dairy, eggs, and fresh, whole vegetables and fruits. (Pollan, 2008)

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<sup>2</sup> Some aboriginal far north humans have survived for thousands of years on a diet of nothing except raw animal products—mostly whale blubber—and live long, healthy lives. The key is to eat it raw. Cooking destroys the vitamin C and that is why the early explorers so often died of scurvy. For this reason the only two mammals that cannot survive on vegetable foods alone are Eskimos and cats.

The third thing to understand about animals and animal agriculture is that every domestic animal has been used for many purposes since the dawn of time. For instance, cattle are kept for their milk, as beasts of burden, and for meat—but there are literally thousands of useful and necessary things made out of every piece of a cow from meat to pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, to leather, bone and blood meal, to adobe brick made out of their manure. The same is true for poultry, pigs, sheep, and goats. Horses are no different. The big, meaty breeds—Belgians, Friesians, Clydesdales—were bred in Europe specifically as meat animals, and as work and war horses. In Asia they milk mares and either drink it fresh, or ferment it into powerful hooch by spitting in it and letting it sit around for a few days.

The basic equation for animal agriculture in the United States is this: first, a producer selects appropriate breeding animals based on the desired characteristics of individual animals for the primary product they will be used for—if it is meat, they will be selecting for ability to grow meat as quickly as possible, on economical feed, and for the highest quality ultimate product in terms of flavor, tenderness and nutritional value. The main purpose of breeding animals is to produce offspring, and a sustainable supply of the product.

Animals destined for harvest are given quality feed and clean water so that they stay healthy and grow quickly. When animals are handled they are managed as stress free as possible—stressed animals do not thrive. When animals are butchered and their carcasses broken down into all of the useful components it is especially important that animals are not stressed when they are killed for a number of reasons—from a quality standpoint, adrenaline and lactic acid builds up very quickly in any animal that is frightened or agitated and the meat will be tough and flavorless. If an animal is handled roughly the meat will be bruised and unusable. Contrary to incendiary rhetoric, neither horses nor any other animal are “beaten and dragged across the border where they face horrific torture and cruel death.”

Both United States and European Union food safety regulations require that all animals, including horses, be guaranteed free of drugs and so are maintained in a controlled environment for a minimum for 30 to 45 days to ensure that all drugs have cleared the system. This is why horses destined for the export market are kept in feed lots in the US for this time period near the borders, and then they are carefully loaded and hauled a much shorter distance, and all of the corrals and chutes have rounded corners so as not to risk bruising the meat. There is every economic incentive for care and zero tolerance for abuse when a horse is destined for the finest tables in Europe and Asia.<sup>3</sup>

Most agricultural people believe that it is spiritually important for humans who are harvesting animals to use systems that are humane—where animals are treated with dignity and respect and the killing process is quick and painless. It doesn't matter whether it is a rancher's carefully placed bullet, a properly used captured bolt in a facility processing hundreds or thousands a day, or a rabbi-wielded sharp knife, slit throat, and a quick bleed-out, the end result is the same—all sensation ends within a few seconds. That is why the work of Dr. Temple Grandin, Animal Behavior Scientist at Colorado State University, and her optimal work to transform industrial slaughter facilities from the animals' point-of-view is so important. (Grandin)

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<sup>3</sup> Freedom of Information Act images of graphic images of injured horses which are widely disseminated by horse slaughter opponents as “proof” of inherent cruelty and abuse are separated from the USDA inspectors' reports that they were associated with, and depict horses that were injured when they arrived at a plant. None were injured at the plant. Most were associated with just a few unethical transporters, all of whom were subsequently charged and prosecuted. Common sense would indicate that once an animal enters a kill chute they do not leave alive, so the insinuation that injuries are the result of poor killing practices like a misused capture bolt mechanism on the head of a live horse is simply, outrageously, false.

According to Dr. Grandin and her designer, Mark Deesing, horse slaughter facilities can be designed and operated to be humane—but it requires BOTH good design and good management. Mr. Deesing adds a wealth of experience with horse handling facilities to Dr. Grandin’s impressive credentials. He has designed horse facilities for the Bureau of Land Management to handle wild horses, and has worked and observed horse slaughter facilities so he has solid understanding of the components necessary to ensure proper handling. (Grandin & Deesing, 2009)

Even when domestic animals are not destined for meat production, that valuable asset will eventually be salvaged. The dairy cow’s business is the production of milk. She is bred to a bull in order to produce a calf, thus activating her normal annual cycle of lactation. The calf is a by-product that is marketed separately—sometimes to be raised as a milking or breeding animal—more often as veal or beef. Once the dairy cow reaches the point in her life cycle where milk production decreases substantially or ceases because she does not conceive she is marketed for her salvage value as a meat animal; with the salvage value being reinvested into young dairy cows. Another example would be sheep where the primary product might be fine wool, but almost all of the lambs as well as the older, less productive animals are marketed as meat. In a world where someone starves to death every 3.6 seconds and 75% of those people are children under the age of 5, we should be thankful so many facets of agriculture ultimately produce healthy, high-protein meat.

The primary purpose of horses might be for breeding in order to improve a particular bloodline; it might be as riding animals for ranch work; for sport—rodeo, racing, dressage, jumping, hunting, or polo ponies; they might be used to pull carriages, wagons, plows, and chariots; they have been used in the past as mighty steeds in open warfare; and fleet, intelligent transporters of people and goods since the first cave woman decided to raise an orphan colt along with the kids and dogs in the camp. Many horses are never suitable for any of these purposes, and even those who are will cease to be either through injury or age. When that time comes, depending on the beliefs, philosophies, and/or financial circumstances of the owner—some owners will need to sell horses for their salvage value, and some of those horses will be used for food.

Today, less than 1% of Americans are actively engaged in animal agriculture, and yet this is the one industry that provides all Americans with absolutely essential food for existence. Animal agriculture is a business. To be successful, a producer must build up an asset, must preserve and grow that asset, and market products. In a free market system that means producing a product that somebody wants or needs enough to pay a fair price and create profit for the seller. When the asset is no longer profitably producing it needs to be sold for whatever salvage value is possible, and the proceeds reinvested back into more productive assets. It doesn’t matter whether you are producing widgets, or pounds of meat, the fundamental realities are the same. One of those fundamental realities is that the salvage market, whatever the market is for products of lesser quality, is what establishes the baseline, the floor, for a market.

Some people in America who are far removed from animal agriculture—people who have no concept of animal husbandry or what it takes to manage living animals for profit—insist that horses are inherently unsuitable as food animals. They believe the only use for horses is as pets, as companion animals, and for sport and when no longer useful for these narrow purposes the owner’s only option should be to kill them and dispose of the carcass. Such people ignore or dismiss the fact that horses have historically been used for food in the United States, and still are in the majority of world cultures. If this dangerous viewpoint can be foisted on Americans through court actions or legislation, then the end result will be the denial of an important food source to a starving world, plus complete elimination of a salvage market for horses.

This is unfortunately happening in the United States today! The last three horse processing plants in the nation, operating in Texas and Illinois, were closed by state court action in both states. The last one closed in 2007. These actions were financed and directed by radical animal rights organizations led by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) who advocate vegan diets for all Americans, and insist that animals should have the right to be represented by human lawyers in a court of law. Because so many Americans are emotionally attached to horses as pets, and have no relationship or understanding of animal agriculture economics, rich and powerful lobby groups such as HSUS and PETA (which twist, exaggerate and misrepresent facts and present graphic images out of context) have been able to successfully manipulate public opinion.

### *Horrific Unintended Consequences*

Today the only market left for unusable horses in the United States is through processing plants in Canada or Mexico. This has resulted in horrific unintended consequences that most of the nation is only just now beginning to realize.

The timing couldn't have been worse. Just when the economy is taking a major downturn—jobs being lost, homes being foreclosed on, livelihoods disappearing—horses as expensive luxury items are no longer saleable. Local governments and livestock agencies have seen a doubling and tripling in the number of neglected, abandoned, and starving horses every year since 2007. (A Million Horses: Documenting Abandoned, Abused and Neglected Horses)

Pre-2007 most jurisdictions had provision for trying to determine ownership and responsibility in these cases, and if that could not be done the animals could be sold for the cost of the feed and care. Now, most sale barns won't even let you unload a horse unless it is in good shape and healthy, you leave payment for yardage (feed, water, and commission), and agree to pick them up if they do not sell. Since the livestock agencies can no longer recoup the costs through the marketing of abandoned horses, feed, care, euthanasia, and disposal costs all become an additional burden on taxpayers. (Board, 2009)

An undergraduate research project conducted by Utah State University led by Equine Specialist, Dr. Patricia Evans, and Economist DeeVon Bailey concluded the following:

***The ban on harvesting horses has put employees at the harvesting facilities out of jobs at a time when the nation is facing unemployment and recession concerns. At the same time, these groups have put tens of thousands of horses in a prime situation for neglect and abandonment. It does not take too much insight to understand if the U.S. harvest facilities remain closed and there is an attempt to stop transportation of horses across our borders the federal government will have to take on a prominent role to ensure that unwanted horses are cared for humanely. This will require money from already overspent budgets to supply patrols at the border in an attempt to stop horses from crossing. The drain on the U.S. economy will continue as other regulations and funding are required to fix the current and future situations that develop to a problem that did not exist. "If it isn't broke, don't fix it" is a statement that seems to apply to the U.S. horse harvesting situation. These facilities provided an export market for unwanted horses amounting to approximately \$26 million in value and also provided employment to U.S. citizens, both with limited government involvement. Public***

***policy should not be based on emotional appeals, but rather on hard facts. It appears that no one read nor listened to the facts and now the facts are haunting even those who made the wrong decision.***

***While not the focus of this paper, questions about what the economic effect of the ban will have on the U.S. economy deserve attention (hay producers, feed mills, tack shops, and the price of horses). It is clear that persons purchasing horses will now need to consider disposal costs for the horse at the end of its useful life rather than anticipating any salvage value for the horse when it is sold. Evidence suggests that horse prices have decreased since the implementation of the ban and indicate that the negative effect of the ban on the industry is widely based.*** (Evans, Bailey, Rice, Jones, Shumway, & McKendrick, 2008)

### *The Problem with Wild Horses*

All of those starving and abandoned horses join the more than 30,000 so-called wild horses that are now standing in feed lots and holding pens off of public lands in the West, and the more than 100,000<sup>4</sup> still running wild on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ranges and destroying the ecosystem because they are over-populated and over-grazed—all at taxpayer expense.

In Washington the Yakima Tribe is struggling with the problems created by more than 12,000 feral horses that are severely impacting their traditional cultural practices and tribal land uses. Western states continue to ask the federal government to mitigate the overgrazing and ecosystem destruction caused by wild horses that are eliminating wildlife habitats and constraining multiple use priorities for public lands. Unmanaged horse herds double in population every four years and only a fraction of the number necessary to maintain sustainable wild herds are being removed. Nonetheless, there are now as many wild horses in feedlots and holding facilities off of the public lands as the BLM acknowledges are still running wild—all being fed and cared for at taxpayer expense.

One of the problems of trying to maintain feral wild horses as if they were wildlife is that wildlife is managed aggressively in most jurisdictions to ensure a sustainable population—generally through hunting seasons or lethal predator controls. While outside of the scope of this paper, an excellent discussion of this problem is contained in New Mexico State graduate student, Ashton Graham’s paper on Wild Horses and Federal Tax Dollars which concludes:

***Though wild horses are a part of our American heritage, some action needs to be taken to reduce the numbers of wild horses in the open range and in captivity. One of the biggest problems with the numbers of horses that the BLM has to manage is the public’s opinion about what should be done with the excess horses. Adoption and fertility control appear to be acceptable options, but these options do not come close to solving the cost-benefits problem. Individuals and groups have played on emotions without giving adequate thought to the inefficiencies of the current program. While the BLM itself states that costs are rising, the***

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<sup>4</sup> Official BLM counts only include 33,000 horses on public lands. Independent counts using Google Earth maps and similar technologies claim there are far more than three times those numbers, which is substantiated anecdotally by ranchers who operate around public lands.

***American public resists the most efficient way to solve the problem. Emotion, not science, is driving the decisions that allow the inefficiency to continue.***

***Until pressure is put on the US Government and the BLM to comply with the law and effectively manage this inefficient program, costs will continue to outpace revenue. The Secretary of the Department of Interior must strengthen compliance and enforce consequences. Enacting legislation to prohibit transporting horses to Canada and Mexico would be detrimental to the equine industry and would inevitably put more strain on government entities for both horses in the private sector and horses under federal care. Americans need to accept and embrace the idea of using horse meat for human consumption outside of the United States. While the decisions may be difficult, science and fiscal responsibility should dictate responses instead of emotions and special interests. An important solution is available and should be implemented. That solution would benefit the government financially and would benefit others around the world by providing a food source. (Graham, 2008)***

### *Valuable Asset to Expensive Liabilities*

It used to be that when a horse owner fell upon hard times that horse was still an asset that could be liquidated into cash long before the horse suffered the agonizing prolonged emaciation, disease, and pain of starvation because the owners could no longer afford to feed them. Even if you considered your horse an old pet and never wanted to see them slaughtered, you could almost always find an equine rescue or recovery organization willing to take them. With more than 10,000,000 horses in the US today and nowhere to go with the 1% to 2% that can't be used, or the owner can no longer support, these organizations are overwhelmed.

For those of us who understand the realities of animal agriculture the ethical, moral and responsible thing to do when you can no longer care for an animal is to ensure their end-of-life experience is as quick, painless, and stress free as possible. For us to see an animal starved to death is an outrage beyond comprehension. Part of our ethical responsibility to animals as the spiritual creatures that they are is to make sure that nothing is wasted, and that the sustenance and usefulness we gain from their lives is acknowledged and respected, that their lives have not been in vain. Any rancher faced with extended drought or changing circumstances will sell their breeding animals for slaughter, even at a loss, long before they starve.

**Even a botched captured bolt death in a kill chute is over in less than one minute and far, far preferable to an agonizingly prolonged death by starvation.**

Almost every rancher I know keeps a few old pets around who never make it to the food chain. My grandpa had an old longhorn steer named Poncho who lived so long both horns turned down. I think he was over 20 years old when he finally died. My cousin's daughter keeps a 500 lb. sow that she raised for 4-H and can't bear to part with. Old horses who have been with a family a long time are often allowed to live out their lives as pensioners, and when the time comes and they begin to suffer, we put them down ourselves. Same goes for any animal—cow, dog, pig, cat, or sheep—that becomes too sick or injured to recover. A quick and merciful death is an ethical and moral imperative, and part of our responsibility as owners of livestock.

As a result of the US plants closing, the only unusable horses that have any market at all are those that are in good enough shape to be worth the trucking to Canada or Mexico. Remember that in the business of animal agriculture, and the production of food—the product we sell is pounds of meat. Horse sale barns across the country are going broke, and are having to institute draconian policies like insisting on a \$350 deposit to cover normal feed, water, and care in the yard, and euthanasia and disposal of the carcass if a horse doesn't sell. Because there is no bottom, and very little salvage value left, the value of all horses as assets has plummeted by as much as 70% to 80%. For us that means a young saddle horse we could expect \$10,000 to \$12,000 in 2007 will be lucky to bring \$1,500 today.

At a recent public hearing (March, 2009) at the Montana Legislature, one horseman testified that he used to buy a loose horse going through a sale ring, thus diverting them from a kill pen. If he could train and resell the horse his gamble paid off in a good profit—if the horse was untrainable, or didn't work out for whatever reason, he had the option of re-selling the animal for about the purchase price. This is no longer the case, and the once viable segment of the horse industry where this man and countless others like him made a living has died. The universal loss of value in the equine industry nation-wide is affecting everything from the availability of financing, to insurance coverage, to the entire health of rural communities and service industries in areas with significant numbers of horses, not to mention tax revenues. Those who raise and train horses for a living have seen their net worth, livelihood and lifestyle disappear. If even a part of your agricultural assets are in horses (saddle horses on a cow outfit, for example), your net worth has dropped proportionately.

Our family doesn't eat horses, but we aren't bothered by the fact that lots of people do, and are certainly appreciative of the fact that there is a very strong export market...if we can just get to it. China and Brazil are the largest importers of horse meat at 100,000 metric tons per year each, with Europe, Japan, Asia, French Canada and Mexico close behind. All of the US plants were owned by foreign companies supplying these export markets, as well as a limited domestic market for pet food, zoo meat, and ethnic markets. Since 2007 the US is now importing more than 500 metric tons of horse meat. (USDA, 2008)

### *Abhorrence of Horse Meat is a Cultural Phenomenon*

The abhorrence for horse meat that some Americans have is a purely cultural artifact. Horse meat was widely consumed in the US until well after World War II, and it still is in almost all of the rest of the world. Walk into a supermarket anywhere in Europe and you will find it on the meat counters right next to the beef, pork, and chicken. It comes in steaks, mince, burgers, family bags, barbecue packs, you name it.

Austrians eat it in hot dogs, dumplings, or in a warming stew with a peanut sauce. Belgians like it smoked (for breakfast) or raw (in steak tartare). The Swiss are partial to steaks, the Germans have it in sweet and sour sauce and, in Iceland, horse fondue is quite the thing. One recent NPR report mentioned that frugal Icelanders, in light of a diminished economy, were avoiding imported beers and returning to traditional foods like horse meat, which is half the price of beef. (Frugal Icelanders Prepare For The Holidays, 2008)

While France is traditionally most associated with horse meat, the Italians devour the most—accounting for more than 80% of the Eastern European horse export market—and favor it stewed, shredded in a rocket salad with a twist of lemon, or made into sausages.

My brother and his family spent two years working in Sicily and horse meat was on all of the menus there. My son, a graduate student, attended an academic conference in Finland last summer and reported that the horse steak he was served was much better than either the reindeer steak with lingon berries, or the plate full of little fried fish. A recent email message that I received from Wisconsin reported that they were able to get horse sausage at a local butcher shop until just a couple of years ago.

Gordon Ramsey, one of the celebrity chefs, has put horse meat on his London menus. A meat which is delicious and nutritious, described as ever so slightly gamey, lovely and sweet, gorgeously tender and, best of all, very low in fat. Horse meat is high in protein (twice as much as beef), low in fat (it has 40% fewer calories than the leanest beef) and is rich in both iron and Omega 3. Horse meat is free from Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (mad cow disease) - horse breeding for meat has never been industrialized and horses are fussy, only feeding on grass and grain.

***British presenter and writer Janet Street-Porter was much taken by the new superfood after visiting a horse farm in France, a race track, and a barbecue featuring horse meat, and trilled "Horse meat is a really good source of protein and one we should take seriously." It is also fabulously versatile and can substitute beef, pork, mutton or lamb in virtually any recipe. "In a world of mad cows, we should be opening our eyes to new types of red meat." (Fryer, 2007)***

And, why not? After all we eat cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks and deer on a regular basis. Over recent years we've embraced all manner of faddy meats – ostrich, emu, even kangaroo and crocodile. Some people will eat a rattlesnake, and lots of people in Asia and developing countries will eat rats, and dogs, and cats. All you have to do is flick on the TV to see Survivorman chowing down on all sorts of disgusting slugs and snakes, or the Food Channel to see some guy traveling the world eating weird food from grasshoppers to monkey brains.

So...from a strictly logical standpoint, the American aversion is more than a teensy bit irrational.

### *Criminalization of Horse Meat is a Radical Imposition on Liberty*

From a political and regulatory standpoint the effort to criminalize the consumption of horse meat is a radical imposition on the liberties of Americans, and indeed a futile and arrogant attempt to change the diet and food practices of other nations—including our closest neighbors. Dr. Terry Whiting, who is the Chair of the Canadian Veterinary Medicine Association's Animal Welfare Committee probably articulates this best in an article he wrote for the Canadian Veterinary Journal:

***"In liberal democracies, governments are usually reluctant to limit personal freedom unless there is an objective, demonstrated public good. For example, some human nudity, specifically public nudity, is restricted by statute in Canada and the USA. Private nudity is uncontrolled and the commercialization of nudity in the entertainment industry is only somewhat regulated. Although under certain circumstances nudity is "offensive" to the general public, it is in no way prohibited. I would argue that good laws are written in a way to protect the innocent from injuries that they could not be protected from in the absence of a statute.***

***In application of this principle of liberal democracy to the horse meat discussion; the USA is a major exporter of poultry, pork, and beef products, so the export of other meat is not***

*offensive. Provided horses born in the USA are raised, transported, and slaughtered under conditions similar to those for beef cattle or pigs, in what way is an American injured by Canadians or Europeans and Asians consuming horse meat? If a claim of injury is made, what is the nature and severity of that injury? There is agreement that horse slaughter is offensive to some; however, when is personal offence sufficient cause in a liberal democracy for state enforced prohibition or the use of force to deny personal choice to other citizens? Critics of government typically argue that government should refrain from doing that which individuals are capable of doing for themselves. It is an immense expansion of government powers to extend into the regulation of the average citizen's diet or, apparently, to attempt to alter the diet patterns of other nations.” (Whiting, 2007)*

## Summary

Because these efforts have become such a threat, and the rights of Americans are close to being abruptly curtailed through the efforts of well financed animal rights organizations, and well meaning, but uninformed horse lovers, there have been an increasing number of states, tribal governments, organizations, and animal agriculture supporters across America including the National Council of State Legislatures, the National Association of Counties, the State Ag and Rural Leaders, the Council of State Governments - Midwest, the International Livestock Identification Association, the Horse Councils of nearly every state in the Union, the American Quarter Horse Association, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, and many more rising up in opposition. In checking with a nation-wide network of activists it appears that legislative action is taking place in a number of states including **Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming**--and legislative efforts in support of the horse industry are being considered for introduction in a number of other states including **Georgia, Kentucky, New Mexico, Nevada, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington.**

All of this activity is focused on convincing Congress to oppose legislation that would restrict the market, transport, processing, or export of horses; to recognize the need for humane horse processing facilities in the United States; and not to interfere with State efforts to establish facilities in the United States.

Serious legislative efforts to reverse the court actions in Texas and Illinois and re-open horse processing facilities, are joined by pro-active legislation to encourage investment in horse processing facilities in North Dakota and Montana.

It is unlikely that any foreign investor will take the risk of investing in another plant anywhere in the US until bills which have been introduced in Congress have been defeated. (H.R. 503 - 2009 Prevention of Cruelty to Equines Act & S. 727 - Prohibit Horses for Human Consumption) This misguided legislation would make it a felony for any person to transport or sell any horse for slaughter. If passed, it would result in a number of devastating and far-reaching consequences:

1. What little market remains for unusable horses through export to Canada and Mexico would be eliminated.
2. It will be the first time that Americans are prohibited from using or selling any domestic animal as food. The prohibition will be based entirely on social and political grounds.

3. Horses are not unique. All livestock animals are intelligent, sentient, living and breathing creatures who have emotions, feel pain, experience fear, and ultimately die.
4. Once it has been legally determined that the process of killing horses is in and of itself inherently cruel to animals, then there really is no difference between that and telling dairies that they can no longer market steer calves and old cows for beef, no difference between that and making it illegal to use sheep for anything except wool.
5. Animal agriculture is a business. Prohibiting horse owners from a salvage market is the same as prohibiting a rental car company from selling their cars once they have too many miles on them.
6. Horses will be instantaneously transformed from valuable assets to expensive liabilities.
7. The economic incentives to keep, breed, and improve the species will be massively impacted.
8. Ranchers, breeders, trainers, and all of the related equine service industries will see their livelihoods greatly diminished, and the rural communities which are based, in part, on the horse industry will be deeply hurt and with the entire economy of the United States in a shambles, their ability to adapt, recover, and transform themselves into something else is very, very limited.

Most importantly of all, the private property rights of individual citizens, and the constitutionally guaranteed rights of states to regulate and conduct commerce, will have been totally compromised. For that reason alone every American should be deeply concerned whether they have ever set foot off of pavement, or ever touched a living animal.

Animal welfare is important. The necessary laws and regulations to protect animals from unnecessary abuse and neglect are already in place. Animal rights are another thing entirely. To give any animal, under any circumstances, the legal rights and privileges of a United States citizen is a folly that leads ultimately to a stupid and senseless suicide for our political system. In the short-term it means the destruction of a traditional and valuable agricultural lifestyle for a few Americans. For the long-term it spells the eventual starvation and demise of the human species because the masses who don't have a clue how to take care of themselves have eliminated the few who still know how to put food on the table.

Recently a comment attached to a blog post has been circulating the internet:

***“Hunting needs to be outlawed,” it says, “why can’t you hunters just go down and buy your meat at the store where they make meat in packages...and no animals get hurt?”***

Grocery stores do not make meat. Living, breathing animals and the people who care for them make meat. The hard, cold, truth is that living things die for you to live...this is an irrefutable, unchangeable fact that no human being can avoid... and survive.

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