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Cruel Deaths in Mexico a Result of Closing U.S. Horse Processing Plants: AVMA

SCHAUMBURG, Ill.

— Efforts to shut down horse processing plants in the United States have led to increased abandonment and neglect of horses in this country and the inhumane death of horses in Mexico, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, director of the AVMA Governmental Relations Division, says that the AVMA, far from being pro-horse slaughter, opposes bills banning slaughter because there are no provisions to take care of the more than 100,000 horses that go unwanted annually in the United States.

"If they think that by passing one of these bills they'll get rid of the problem of unwanted horses, they're simply fooling themselves," Dr. Lutschaunig said.

Efforts by groups calling for an end to horse slaughter, such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), have led to the closure of the three remaining processing plants in the United States. Now, as the AVMA has repeatedly warned, horses are being abandoned in the United States or transported to Mexico where, without U.S. federal oversight and veterinary supervision, they are slaughtered inhumanely.

"The reality is, the HSUS has done nothing to address the real issue here, and, in fact, by seeking to ban horse slaughter, they have made things significantly worse," said Dr. Lutschaunig. "If they really wanted to do something productive to improve the welfare of horses, they would address the issue of unwanted horses

in the United States."

Even if a bill passes banning the transport of horses for slaughter, it would be nearly impossible to enforce. Such a law could easily be circumvented by transporting and selling horses as "working" or "pleasure" horses, only to have them end up in an unregulated foreign slaughter facility.

"The AVMA does not support horse slaughter," Dr. Lutschaunig said. "Ideally, we would have the infrastructure in this country to adequately feed and care for all horses. But the sad reality is that we have a number of horses that, for whatever reason, are unwanted. Transporting them under USDA supervision to USDA-regulated facilities where they are humanely euthanized is a much better option than neglect, starvation, or an inhumane death in Mexico."

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The AVMA, founded in 1863, is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world, with more than 75,000 member veterinarians engaged in a wide variety of professional activities. AVMA members are dedicated to advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine, including its relationship to public health and agriculture. Visit the AVMA Web site at www.avma.org to learn more about veterinary medicine and animal care and to access up-to-date information on the association's issues, policies and activities.