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Special Report: Expert Predictions on Equine Welfare Realized

Colorado Springs, CO. In 2007, animal activists utilized the state legislative and legal systems in Illinois and Texas to close the three USDA-regulated horse processing plants in the United States. A year prior, veterinarians, scientists, and economists - all equine specialists - highlighted the likely consequences of the plant closures in the Animal Welfare Council's (AWC) "The Unintended Consequences of a Ban on Humane Processing of Horses in the United States." Currently, as animal activist groups continue toward their goal of banning the transport of horses to Mexico and Canada for processing it seems the messages in the AWC's original document were ignored. An objective look at the current state of horses in America proves the expert forecast made in 2006 remains relevant today.

Horse Industry and Veterinary Experts predicted that with the elimination of horse processing facilities in the United States, the welfare of horses would be jeopardized.

Here are the Facts:

1. Experts said the closure of American plants would lead to an increase in abandoned and unwanted horses, putting a severe strain on the budgets of rescue facilities, sheriffs departments, and local governments. It did. In a recent national study conducted by the Unwanted Horse Coalition, over 90% of those polled indicated the number of neglected and abused horses is increasing. It requires about \$2,340 to maintain a horse for one year. With no provisions for the care of unwanted horses, **the financial burden has fallen to local taxpayers.**
2. Experts said the closure of the USDA-regulated plants would lead to increased equine neglect, abuse, and malnourishment. It did. There are many reports documenting the rise in neglect, abuse and abandonment including the from the Colorado Department of Agriculture stating that the number of equine cruelty investigations in Colorado rose 60 percent from 2005 to 2009.
3. Experts predicted then that the closure of the plants in the United States would devastate the market for horses. It did. Livestock market owners now put the value of all horses at 40 percent of their 2005 price.

What is the answer to the unwanted horse issue? It is clear that there will always be unwanted horses due to the fact that some horses simply won't meet their owner's expectations or will become ill or infirm. The horse industry has responded to the unwanted horse problem and is developing and implementing programs to reduce the number of unwanted horses. Experts agree that the passing of the pending legislation to ban the transport and commerce related to horse processing would exacerbate all of these issues. H.R.503/S.727 has no financial provisions for the care of unwanted horses. **The question remains:** Who will tend to the additional 100,000 unwanted horses currently being shipped to Canada and Mexico for processing if this bill is passed? In a survey conducted by the Animal Welfare Council in 2009 of 94 government supported animal control centers 53% of respondents acknowledged there are no horse rescue facilities in their area and 83% of respondents cannot house or care for any horses. Animal activist proponents of the legislation do not have a viable plan for caring for the nation's unwanted horses.

Horses are an invaluable part of the livestock industry and the horse industry is actively committed to the humane treatment of the horse. H.R.503/S.727 is an unfunded mandate that fails to address the issues surrounding unwanted horses in the United States.

For the complete information on the AWC works cited go to the [Animal Welfare Council Website](#).

The Animal Welfare Council is a non-profit, tax exempt 501(C) (3) organization established for charitable and educational purposes. Membership includes organizations and business entities who are actively involved in caring for animals in recreation, entertainment, sport and industry.