



## PASSAGE OF H.R. 1094 AND S. 541 WOULD FURTHER INCREASE EQUINE ABANDONMENT AND NEGLECT

### H.R. 1094 & S. 541 –The “Safeguard American Food Exports Act of 2013”

H.R. 1094 would “prohibit the sale or transport of equines and equine parts interstate or foreign commerce for human consumption.”

S. 541 has a stated purpose “to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

Both bills would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to prohibit the sale or transport of equines or equine parts in interstate and foreign commerce for purposes of human consumption.

**Background:** In 2007 animal rights backed legal action in Texas and the passage of legislation banning the processing for horses passed in Illinois resulted in the closing of the final horse processing plants in the United States. Additionally, from 2007 until 2011, Federal Agriculture Appropriations bills included a rider that preventing any federal funds from being used for inspection of horses for processing for human consumption. Currently there is no prohibition of the use of federal funds and there is a [plant in Roswell, New Mexico](#) that is waiting for USDA/FSIS/APHIS approved to open. Recently President Obama released his proposed [2014 Budget](#) which did not include funding for inspectors.

Equine welfare in the United States has suffered as the plants have closed and the economy has worsened. Groups that oppose legislation to ban the processing of horses for human consumption include the American Association of Equine Practitioners, American Veterinary Medical Association, American Quarter Horse Association, and many other horse and agriculture groups. This opposition is based on the fact that they are unfunded mandates and do not provide for the welfare of unwanted horses.

### The 2013 Safeguard American Food Exports Acts do not address:

- **Government Accountability Office Report:** The [GAO report](#), released in 2011, revealed that a lack of horse processing in the United States has exacerbated the suffering, and increased abandonment, neglect, pain and misery for horses nationwide.
- **Disposition of Unwanted Horses:** These bills do not offer any funding or programs for horses that would have been humanely processed or any euthanasia and carcass disposal alternatives. Abandoned and neglected horses are [overwhelming equine rescue and sanctuary organizations](#) and if these bills pass the situation would become much worse. Currently, many privately and publically funded rescue and retirement facilities are at capacity and do not have the resources to take the additional horses that would become unwanted if these bills were to pass and take away the option of transporting horses to processing plants. In 2012 over 158,000 U.S. horses were shipped to Canada and Mexico for processing for human consumption.
- **Economic Hardship to Local Governments.** Local and state governments are faced with the financial hardship of taking care of neglected horses that are seized through cruelty and neglect investigations. Resources must be provided for unwanted horses that are voluntarily given up by their owners or those abandoned by desperate horse owners. A [survey](#) published in 2009 by the Animal Welfare Council revealed that up to 83% of public animal shelters surveyed cannot house and care for any horses. Others can only care for a limited number, only 6% of personnel are very well trained, facilities have budget limitations, and most reported an increase in number of calls related to abandoned and neglected horses.

- **Industry Solutions:** The horse industry is diligently working to educate its members on responsible ownership and provide resources for horse owners. The [Unwanted Horse Coalition](#) leads the way in this effort offering programs such as grants for free gelding clinics and extensive educational materials. Many states have followed suit including Colorado, where the horse industry has formed the [Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance](#) (CUHA) which is partially funded by a tax check off program. CUHA has conducted [research](#) to gather information on the extent of the problem and is offering resources to not only horse rescues in Colorado, but also the horse industry to work on solutions to the unwanted horse issues in that state.

**Conclusion:** Enacting legislation without properly understanding, exploring and examining all the surrounding issues will harm an industry that is already diligently working to seek solutions for with unwanted horses without government intervention. Unwanted horses in the United States are facing a crisis. From New York to California, horses that are considered at-risk in the equine population are being severely impacted by a struggling economy, high grain and hay prices, and the closure of the U.S.'s remaining processing plants. The result: increased equine cruelty in the form of abuse, neglect, and abandonment. The passage of this legislation would also be detrimental to local governments across the country as many unwanted horses may be abandoned, thus making it the public's responsibility to care for them.

**For more information:**

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