



Slaughtering Horses

There is nothing pretty about killing a horse. Nobody knows that more than those of us who have done it.

There are people who are actively attempting to get a federal bill passed that will “prevent the slaughter of horses in and from the U.S. for human consumption and other purposes.” Those supporting this bill seem to fall into two groups; (1) those that have very little knowledge of the horse industry, of the problems facing the BLM Wild Horse Program, and the practical realities of burying a dead horse, and (2) people who are very knowledgeable about horses yet find the slaughter of them using packing house methods inhumane.

Both of these groups are sincere and are not always raving animal rights lunatics. They admit that their solutions are not necessarily practical and probably expensive, but are worth it. Those that are against the bill admit there are no easy solutions, particularly with the BLM wild horses, but say we’ve got to do something even if it’s not pretty. They are not cruel people, they just don’t have the luxury to do nothing. Somebody has to be responsible. It is they.

Horses have been this country’s most valuable beast of burden since Cortez turned ‘em loose in 1535. The motorcar diminished their importance as a tool in the 20th century but they have returned to huge numbers today as a toy, sporting good, pet or friend.

The middle ground is not so hard to find. In my observations one issue that would have to be

faced is the idea that we have the right to deny other cultures our horses for human consumption. It would be like Mexico refusing to sell their marijuana to our addicts because they think it’s harmful, or India not selling us beef because their cows are holy, or France refusing to sell us pâté because we couldn’t appreciate it.

And, the supporters of the ban would need to concede that traders should be allowed to make money. This is America.

Which leaves the biggest and most substantial bone of contention; humane slaughter. As it was pointed out to me by one horsewoman, dead is dead. The disposition of the carcass, be it dog food, taxidermy, wolf bait or Pierre’s platter is irrelevant.

Like most complicated issues, the answer doesn’t have to be. If Solomon were here he might say “waste not – want not, recycling horsemeat through omnivores beats dumping them in a landfill but...” he would say, “Horses are not cows, and they deserve an anesthetic cocktail before the .44 caliber entrée is served.”