

National Legislative Issues

Compiled by Harold Ault

Horse Slaughter – About the middle of January, 2007, it was reported on the radio and in the Des Moines register that the two horse slaughter operations in Texas have been shut down by a court order. This leaves the horse slaughter operation in Illinois as the only location in the United States where horses can be slaughtered for human consumption. On January 17, 2007, S 311 was introduced in the United States Senate to amend the Horse Protection Act to prevent the transportation and slaughter of horses in the United States for human consumption. Also on January 17, 2007, HR 503 was introduced in the United States House to prevent the transportation and slaughter of horses in the United States for human consumption. Similar legislation was offered in the 109th Congress which ended last year. The legislation passed the House but failed to come up for debate in the Senate before the end of the 109th Congress and therefore was dead. Each Congress lasts two years and last year was the second year of the 109th Congress. That is why it had to be reintroduced in the 110th Congress if it was to receive further consideration. The process is starting all over again.

National Animal Identification System

– The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) has become voluntary instead of mandatory. The NAIS has three parts that consist of premises identification numbers, animal identification numbers, and animal tracking. In Iowa, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship is continuing to assign premises identification numbers on a voluntary basis. At this time there are no definite plans to implement animal identification numbers and animal

tracking on a voluntary basis in Iowa. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has not finalized its rules for implementing animal tracking for equines. The Equine Species Working Group (ESWG) has made a recommendation to the USDA that no equine movements should be reported. There has been some talk of requiring reporting of movements where health papers are required, there is a brand inspection, horses cross state lines or other cases where paper work is already required. If horse owners choose to utilize microchips for the purpose of official identification, the ESWG recommends use of the ISO/ANSI compatible RFID chip (11784/85, 134.2 kHz) and that RFID reader and scanner manufacturers and suppliers should make an immediate effort to provide readers and scanners that can read ISO/ANSI 11784/11785 microchips, and read, or at least detect, all 125 kHz frequency animal microchips. For further information on the NAIS please visit the revised NAIS website: www.usda.gov/nais. For information on the ESWG and its recommendations, please visit: www.equinespeciesworkinggroup.com.

Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act

– Congress passed the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, which the President signed into law on November 27, 2006. The new law strengthens the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, which was originally passed in 1992 to make it a federal crime to steal animals, damage property, or disrupt activities involving animals, including rodeos, horse shows, and other equine competitions. The new law requires restitution for certain economic losses suffered as a result of the unlawful activities. The new law also includes a provision noting that the prohibitions do

not apply to expressive conduct, such as picketing or other peaceful demonstrations, which are protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Unwanted Horse Coalition

– The Unwanted Horse Coalition (UHC) was formed to find solutions to the problem of what to do with unwanted horses. The UHCC met in Lexington, Ky., on October 31, 2006 to discuss issues relating to the unwanted horse situation in the United States. The meeting was an important step in establishing the core goals of the UHC. The meeting was attended by representatives from the American Association of Equine Practitioners, American Paint Horse Association, American Quarter Horse Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, The Jockey Club, National HBPA, National Thoroughbred Racing Association, Professional Rodeo Stock Contractors, Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, United States Equestrian Federation, and US Trotting Association. The UHC grew out of a workshop that the American Association of Equine Practitioners organized as part of the 2005 American Horse Council (AHC) National Issues Forum in Washington, D.C. The meeting and a subsequent summit in Chicago five months later, drew equine and welfare organizations together to begin discussion about the tens of thousands of horses that are unwanted each year and sent to slaughter facilities.

The mission of the Coalition is to explore ways to reduce the number of horses that are unwanted each year and to improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to health, safety, and responsible care of the horse. Owner education will be a focal point.



Photo by Patricia Jencks

