

# HC

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Equestrian Women

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## LETTERS TO



The response to the feature article in our March issue has been overwhelming. I have received close to 100 emails regarding the Vatican vs. the Vikings article, and nearly all of the letters expressed positive feedback and solutions to the horse slaughter debacle. If you missed this groundbreaking article, go to our website and click on the cover that has the horse world talking!

Hi Geoff,

I just wanted to congratulate you for addressing the horse slaughter issue 'head-on'. We need to face the realities of why Americans feel as they do about horses and that perhaps our emotional response is not in the best interest of horses over-all.

The money being spent to ban slaughter of horses in America would be so much better spent to ensure the relative comfort of those animals as they are shipped, that the animals are kept only for a limited time in stock yards and that they are fed and watered adequately while they are there. And, finally that their lives are promptly and humanely ended with minimal fear and pain.

Kudos to Tom Moates for a timely article that does not embrace the rhetoric that is so popular in these debates; but rather presents the facts and history of this issue in a way that encourages open-minded consideration of what would happen in a perfect world and what would be the best that we can do in the real world.

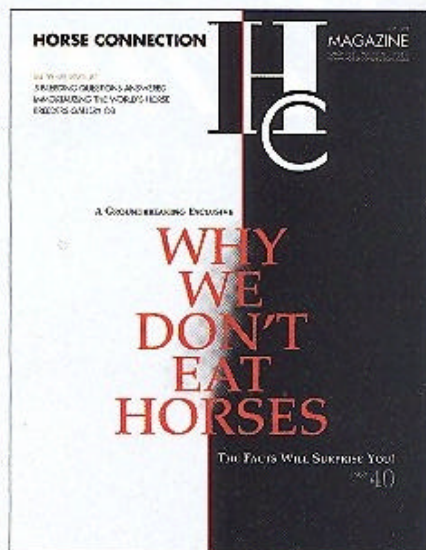
Brenda Thoma

Dear Geoff,

I don't give out magazine awards, nor do I know if you're interested in such things. But what I do know is that when I look at the visual flotsam of the national horse magazines, I realize that Horse Connection is not only the industry leader in terms of editorial content, but without a doubt the shining example of artistic excellence in an otherwise dreary world filled with predictable people, boring events and paddock potato horses.

So well done, you and the Horse Connection team, for having taken a story of immense historical and cultural importance, and not only treated it with the respect that it deserved, but made it one hundred times stronger by the addition of these fantastic images and this inspiring layout.

Kind regards,  
CuChullaine O'Reilly



Hi Geoff,

Very interesting read. We've actually been pointing out for years that Pope Gregory forbade the consumption of horsemeat, so I'd be very interested to know if you ever receive a response from the Vatican. Italy is by far the largest horsemeat-consuming nation in the world!

As far as the claim that horsemeat is "healthy," well, I suppose that would depend upon where the horsemeat originated. US horsemeat most certainly is NOT a healthy choice. As you well know, US horses are not raised or medicated as an animal intended for human consumption. I certainly wouldn't want to be the one chomping down on a horse-steak cut from one of our US racehorses loaded up on bute, lasix, steroids, clenbuterol, and goodness knows what else! It has always boggled my mind how our USDA can simply slap their stamp of approval on this meat, knowing full well that it is NOT safe for people to consume. Guess that says a great deal about how concerned USDA is about food safety. Scary.

Thank you so very much for your continued courage in keeping the discussion of this issue ongoing in the Horse Connection!

Kind regards,  
Gail Vacca  
Illinois Coordinator  
National Horse Protection Coalition



To HC,

I honestly believe that until breeders (professional and backyard breeders alike) take responsibility for the foals they produce, there won't be a whole lot of good news for horses in general. The best of the breeds will still be high priced and valued, all other horses are subject to our throwaway society. I would love to see money set aside to assist gelding colts and incentives to equine vets to offer low cost euthanasia and a low-cost solution to burying/cremating a 1000-pound animal. If we are going to regulate the horse industry, these are ways to curb the overpopulation and assist culling of horses without the terror of the slaughterhouse.

Donna Taylor

Greetings,

I commend your publication for the invitation to dialog on the topic of horse slaughter.

I have studied this issue for 15 years, and I believe that I understand both sides, so I would like to contribute these thoughts:

I think that we can all agree that whether Americans want it or not, change in the American way of life looms large on the horizon. Witness the price of fuel, which is skyrocketing and causing our way of life to change for better or worse. It will no longer be feasible to over-breed Thoroughbreds for racing or over-breed Quarter horses. The issue of over-breeding is significant for those against slaughter; many rant and rave against this. Horses have been and remain over-bred. It is a fact.

Horse slaughter provided many breeders, professional or back-yard, with an opportunity to make a dollar on an animal no longer wanted or needed, but not any longer. All one had to do was drop the animal off at the "killer buyer."

This has changed. It is not and will never be again economically feasible to breed grade horses any longer anyway.

Besides, taking responsibility for horses bred is just a good idea if you ask me. If you can't find a home for the animal, don't breed it. If the horse is sick or has broken a limb, call a vet and have the animal euthanized. Of course, this will cost, but horses never were a poor or lower middle-class man's hobby anyway.

Thank you  
All the best  
Sharon Janus

Good afternoon Geoff,

You asked for positive input concerning horse slaughter. I will not pretend that I'm not anti-slaughter but I will be positive. Let's start here:

"Many have forgotten this truth, but you must not forget it. You remain responsible, forever, for what you have tamed." – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

You ask why the two sides have to be so polarized. There is your answer. The anti-slaughter forces are mostly talking about not wanting PETS to be killed. There is no morally defensible position that can say that horses are pets but that we can eat some of them. So you end up with a polarized issue where one side calls them pets and the other side must avoid giving them that status.

You ask the question "why not allow horse's bodies, after they die, to go to the greater good and provide nourishment for those people that care to eat them." I know you asked for positive input but you cannot make a statement like that and not expect to be taken to task for it. First, your use of the term "the greater good" makes me want to vomit. There is no such thing. Most atrocities in human history have the words "the greater good" attached to them. Second, you have ignored the main question of the debate. We are not talking about whether or not it's OK to eat horses; we are talking about whether or not it's OK to eat pets.

Inhumane treatment of "unwanted horses" should be the reason for the individual responsible to be "perp" walked before a judge and have the book thrown at them. It should not be used as an excuse for slaughterhouses. If this were the case then the US should just start shipping all of those "unwanted dogs" straight to China. Would you like to place a wager on when that will happen?

I believe the solution to this issue is to institute a system that distinguishes "pet" horses from "livestock" horses. The system could use lip tattoos like those used by thoroughbred and warmblood breeders and this would make the pet horses easy to distinguish during brand inspections. Once a horse is identified as a pet horse after sale to an individual owner that horse cannot be sold as livestock and cannot be sent to slaughter for human consumption.

The end result of such a system would probably be high prices for pet horses because the individual owner would be responsible for the horse through its natural life which extends beyond most horses "useful" lives. Instead of just getting rid of a horse after you can no longer ride it, owners would be forced to take care of the horse. Just as with dogs and cats, backyard breeding would be highly discouraged and even professional breeders would have to be careful with their breeding programs.

It's time for humans to start holding up their end of the deal and treat horses, with whom they have interacted for years, with the love and effort the horses have given us.

John West