

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today in support of H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act.

Please allow me a moment to introduce myself and provide you with a perspective as to why I feel my testimony will help clarify some of the issues surrounding the discussion of H.R. 503. My name is Dr. Patricia Hogan and I am an equine veterinary surgeon. I have been actively involved with the horse industry all of my life. I am originally a New Jersey native but was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine. I completed several years of specialty training in both Kentucky and Texas in order to refine my veterinary focus to the surgical disciplines of the horse. I am a board-certified surgeon and have been practicing exclusively in the field of equine surgery for the past 10 years. I have been fortunate enough in my career to have received international recognition for my work in the treatment of equine sports injuries, arthroscopy, and internal fixation of fractures. My clientele is somewhat exclusive – I work primarily on some of the best Thoroughbred and Standardbred racehorses in this country – oftentimes the market value of some of my patients run into the many millions of dollars. Several of my patients, such as SMARTY JONES and AFLEET ALEX, have gone on to become household names. Yet I am here today before you to provide support for the tens of thousands of horses that bear little to no market value - the unwanted horse.

For me personally, as a veterinarian who makes a living caring for horses, the slaughter issue is not entirely about the act of slaughter itself. It is about the welfare of the horse throughout this whole process – that being the manner in which they are treated from the moment they leave their place of origin to their arrival at the slaughterhouse.

I am surprised that no one ever seems to openly discuss the absolutely deplorable way these animals are treated on their way to the slaughter house. Once these horses enter the path to the slaughter house, their treatment is not humane in any way. I dismiss the triviality of the studies detailing the number of whinnies per hour or the number of horses that arrive with or without a broken leg as statistical evidence of humane treatment. Or the proclaimed accuracy of the captive-bolt. Sometimes, we as veterinarians (and yes, I mean the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) and American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) here) hide behind the term "humane" and it is often used as the "catch-all" phrase to make us feel that things are done correctly and within the letter of the law. However, the whole act of being taken from an environment that is familiar, then thrown into a hostile herd environment, shipped very long distances without food or water, and then placed in an assembly line where they can see, smell, hear, and sense the terror of what is happening in front of them is not humane. Certainly we all agree that there are levels of intelligence dictating the rank of species in this world and at some point we must draw the line. Horses are very intelligent and can perceive fear in a different manner than other forms of livestock such as a chicken or even a cow. The concept of "humane treatment" entails different basic requirements for different species.

The American culture does not accept consumption of our dogs or cats for food, but there are other cultures in this world that do. Yet we do not allow the commercial slaughter of dogs and cats for export in this country because we as Americans find that practice deplorable. That being said, Americans do not eat horsemeat and in poll after poll, the American people say that the practice of horse slaughter is unacceptable and should be stopped – yet we allow our American horses to be slaughtered for foreign

consumption. Where is the difference here? It is important to remember that horses are not nor have they ever been raised as food animals in this country. The American people have made it very clear that horsemeat is not and will never be a desirable food item gracing their tables. Horses have traditionally been work animals throughout our history. But as society changes and evolves, so has the role of the horse changed in our culture. The majority of horses are now more commonly companion or sport animals.

I have personally been to a horse slaughterhouse as a surgery resident while in Texas and I found it to be a disgrace. I was not there on an "announced" visit as those who defend horse slaughter were - I was there to collect specimens for a research project. In my ignorance, I had actually never even thought much about slaughter before then. I was absolutely revolted at the way the horses were treated and the behavior of the people that were employed there. I have also been to a beef and a chicken slaughter plant too. The treatment of and reaction by the horses was very much in contrast to that of the other livestock I had observed.

I believe there is some confusion regarding humane euthanasia and horse slaughter. We must remember that these are two distinctly different processes. Horse slaughter is NOT euthanasia by anyone's definition. Euthanasia is a peaceful process that most commonly involves the overdose of an intravenous anesthetic drug administered by a veterinarian. The horses are not afraid and there is no fear of anticipation. In most cases, the animal is sedated and then euthanized in a familiar environment. Horse slaughter uses a method called the captive-bolt which involves aiming a bolt gun at the forehead of a partially-restrained horse in what is commonly termed the "kill pen". This pen is at the end of an assembly line of horses that are fed through the plant. If the bolt is applied properly, the horse is rendered unconscious upon impact and drops to the

ground so that the carcass can then be bled out prior to death. There is a great deal of room for human and technical error with the captive bolt method and the recommendation for 'adequate restraint' is loosely defined and open for interpretation.

If anyone on this subcommittee would like to see videos of each process I would be happy to provide them for you so that you may judge for yourself which is the 'humane' method. I am confident that the difference would be dramatic to you.

If we are going to talk about horse slaughter as an economic industry, then there is the additional and timely issue of drug residues in American horsemeat that is rarely addressed. The beef, swine and poultry industry are highly regulated as far as permissible drug residues. The fear of course is the introduction of drug residues into the human food chain and the possible negative impact on human health. Horses receive a large amount of commonly prescribed medications expressly prohibited for use on animals intended for human consumption. Is this matter not addressed simply because this meat is exported for foreign consumption? Would it be different if this meat was entering the American food chain?

As an equine veterinarian, I think that surely we can do better. Is disposal really the answer to this problem of too many horses? Certainly it is the easiest way out but aren't we more intelligent than that? Americans do not eat horsemeat, the American public clearly has overwhelmingly voiced their opposition to this practice, and there are humane considerations that are being overlooked. When organizations such as the AAEP and the AVMA opposed the bill in a blanket fashion, equine veterinarians suffered a major public relations blow. The public, much of the horse industry, and most of the rescue and retirement organizations simply cannot believe that the equine veterinary world - the "protector of the horse" - is "for slaughter". I know that is not what these

organizations meant when they opposed the bill but it is the perception that was given. This position has translated into the AAEP being "pro-slaughter". I know the intentions were good but the way they went about it was not. We are all concerned about the fate of unwanted horses if and when horse slaughter is eliminated but allowing the practice to continue is not the right answer to the problem. Surely we can do better.

The Unwanted Horse Coalition is a step in the right direction, but even that effort would never have been considered had it not been for the introduction of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. Nobody was talking about these very important issues until Congressman John Sweeney, Congressman John Spratt and Congressman Ed Whitfield introduced this sound piece of legislation.

While the introduction of the AHSPA has been a catalyst for discussion into ensuring the humane treatment of horses it has also sparked a surge in horse rescues, cruelty awareness and responsible horse ownership education across the country, all things that must continue to expand. In addition, a valuable resource was created in conjunction with veterinarians, equine rescues and humane groups, called *Basic Guidelines for Operating an Equine Rescue or Retirement Facility* which is currently being used by rescues across the US. These provide a basic outline for individuals interested in opening rescues or assisting those currently operating a sanctuary to ensure they have adequate information to ensure the proper care of horses they may care for.

There are many things we need to clean up within the horse community such as over breeding, cruelty, neglect, and proper long-term care. People must be educated and made responsible horse owners. In my opinion, this is not merely an argument about

whether or not you are for slaughter. That is too simple with the current state of all the unwanted horses in this country. The gray area in-between needs a lot of work and for me, that is where I personally want to be. We have the opportunity to rid ourselves of a form of cruelty by passing the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, something that should have been done years ago. We need to make sure that as we try to clean up this complicated problem, we continue to do whatever we can to continue to "care for horses". This is where our combined efforts should be focused. I urge this Subcommittee to swiftly send the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act to the House floor and call upon the House of Representatives to vote to end horse slaughter, once and for all.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee in support of H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act.