



# Protect New Mexico's Horses From Slaughter

## Why is Animal Protection of New Mexico (APNM) opposed to horse slaughter? I thought it was more humane than sending horses to Mexico where slaughter is largely unregulated?

Comparing US horse slaughter to foreign horse slaughter presents a **false choice**. American horses shouldn't be slaughtered anywhere. The entire horse slaughter "pipeline" is an atrociously cruel enterprise, and it is made especially so because horses are very large "flight animals" who often run when frightened or in danger.

When combining their nature with their massive size and weight, these sensitive herd animals can be easily injured, with particular risk to their legs that are vital to their survival. They are often transported for thousands of miles on crowded trucks without food, water or rest. It is not uncommon for horses to get trampled and killed just in the transportation process.

Once at the slaughter plants, horses undergo the frightening process of being corralled into chutes with other horses, stunned and then killed. Even the most advanced slaughter methods used to kill horses rarely result in quick, painless deaths, as they often endure repeated blows and sometimes are alive and kicking during dismemberment. Investigations of previous American horse slaughter plants inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have revealed [unbearably cruel practices](#), despite inspections by regulators. **Horse slaughter is cruel no matter where it is done.**



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## What does the American public think of horse slaughter?

According to a [2012 poll](#), 80% of Americans support a ban on horse slaughter, recognizing that we have an obligation to ensure horses are treated humanely at every stage of their lives. Horses have served as vital working animals for hundreds of years in New Mexico. They continue to play an important role in many of our state's economies, making them a valued part of our work and play. Horsemen and horsewomen owe it to the horses from whom they benefit to give their horses either lifetime care or humane euthanasia by a veterinarian.

Other countries eat dogs, but Americans do not slaughter and export our homeless dogs. The least we can do is ensure horses have a dignified and humane death, like is the standard for NM's dogs and cats.

In 2007, domestic horse slaughter plants in the United States were closed after pressure mounted to end the heinous practice. Despite the fact that Americans do not consume horsemeat, approximately 100,000 horses—only 1% of America's horses—are purchased each year at American auctions by killer buyers on contract with foreign companies and then trucked long distances in unsafe conditions without food, water or rest to slaughterhouses in Canada and Mexico. Today, fewer American horses are being slaughtered than anytime in the recent past. (In 1990, 340,000 American horses were slaughtered, some in the U.S. and others in Mexico.) We can and should make changes so America doesn't create a worsening homeless horse problem or tolerate cruel remedies for it.

States need to establish systems to ensure the humane euthanasia of homeless horses for whom homes are not available. Slaughter is inhumane and is not a form of euthanasia. APNM estimates that an investment of about \$2 million per year into horse safety net programs would make meaningful and lasting changes for New Mexico's horse crisis.



## What are the alternatives in New Mexico to horse slaughter?

New Mexicans don't have to resort to horse slaughter. With determination, our state could address the entire homeless horse problem humanely.

New Mexico is home to nine horse shelters inspected and licensed by the [New Mexico Livestock Board](#). Mostly volunteer-run, they help care for homeless horses through private donations and currently receive no public funding whatsoever.

The [Equine Protection Fund](#) also has established services that aim to ensure a lifetime of humane care for horses. Services include subsidized feed assistance, gelding, veterinary care, humane euthanasia, support for equine shelters, racehorse re-homing, and a Volunteer Network to supplement all programs.

Still, these existing safety nets for horses cannot address the entire homeless horse problem until programs receive the community support they deserve, as is done for homeless dogs and cats. Proponents of horse slaughter turn their back on its cruelty simply because it has been convenient to do so. Now we have an opportunity to recognize and start to change this cruelty.



## How does horse slaughter affect the New Mexican horse industry?

New Mexico's horse economy is based on relationships with *living* horses—racing, showing, working, feeding, grooming, veterinary care, etc.—not *dead* horses. According to the USDA, more than 92% of American horses sent to slaughter are in good condition. It is a myth that mainly old, sick or injured horses are slaughtered, therefore horse slaughter is not a remedy for the problem of abused and neglected horses in our state.

Industries that rely on horses to make money have an obligation to the well being of horses. The status quo of institutionalized cruelty, extreme neglect and abuse cannot continue.

In the past three years, about 10,000 horses per year were sent to slaughter in Mexico through New Mexico's border. Even though not all these horses originate in New Mexico, it is nonetheless a number that could be managed through ambitious gelding and adoption programs, better stewardship practices and truly humane euthanasia.

