

COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCIAL SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
CAPITAL MARKETS AND  
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES  
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND CONSUMER CREDIT  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

WESTERN CAUCUS  
CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



2492 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

OFFICE NUMBERS  
(575) 522-0771 NEW MEXICO  
(202) 225-2355 WASHINGTON, D.C.

WWW.PEARCE.HOUSE.GOV  
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/REPSTEVEPEARCE  
WWW.TWITTER.COM/REPSTEVEPEARCE  
WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/NMSTEVEPEARCE

STEVAN PEARCE  
Second District, New Mexico

July 27, 2012

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write to you today to express my concerns with your department regarding the updating of equine slaughter inspection regulations. A business located in my district is facing a very real threat of bankruptcy, due to indecision by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This means the potential loss of jobs in New Mexico, as well as lower economic output and tax revenue to that community which, as I'm sure you will agree, is in desperate need of economic certainty at a time when the nation's economy is struggling to get back on its feet.

It is my understanding that the USDA has not updated equine inspection regulations to reflect the industry standards since 2006, and as such, is not moving forward with the application approval process for slaughterhouses wishing to undertake horse slaughter. It is also my understanding that USDA has not established a timeline for the update of these inspection regulations, reflecting a disregard for Congressional intent.

While I recognize the subject of equine slaughter is both sensitive and controversial, Public Law 112-55 reinstated the responsibility of the USDA FSIS personnel to inspect horses under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 603).

As you know, Congress consciously removed the provision that prohibited any funds to pay salaries or expenses of Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) personnel to inspect horses under the Federal Meat Inspection Act in H.R.2112, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012, which was signed by the President on November 18, 2011. Congress did not include the provision likely due to findings contained in a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report which found several negative unintended consequences of this effective ban on horse slaughter in the United States.

The report, titled "Action Needed to Address Unintended Consequences from Cessation of Domestic Slaughter (GAO-11-228)," noted that "U.S. horses intended for slaughter are now traveling significantly greater distances to reach their final destination, where they are not covered by U.S. humane slaughter protections." Additionally, the report drew attention to a

rising number of horse neglect investigations by state, local and tribal governments, as well as an increasing number of abandoned horses since 2007. According to the GAO, "State, local, tribal, and horse industry officials generally attributed these increases in neglect and abandonments to cessation of domestic slaughter and the economic downturn."

As a result of this uncertainty and lack of direction by the USDA, a local business is on the brink of collapse; despite the fact that this business followed the appropriate application procedures outlined by the USDA in order to obtain a permit to operate an equine slaughter facility.

Let me be clear, I am neither advocating for or against the approval of this application. However, as with any business operating in the United States, this business deserves a decision on their application, or least an understanding of the time frame for which they can expect such a decision.

Because this business is so close to shutting its doors, this matter is of urgent importance to me. I respectfully request that you provide my office, within five business days, a reasonable time line for when USDA intends to have the update of these inspection regulations complete. If you have any questions, or if my office can be of any assistance to you, please contact Claire Manatt at (202) 225-2365 or [claire.manatt@mail.house.gov](mailto:claire.manatt@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Steve Pearce  
Member of Congress

Cc: Alfred V. Almanza, Administrator, FSIS  
The Honorable Frank Lucas, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture  
The Honorable Jack Kingston, Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations  
The Honorable Susana Martinez, Governor, New Mexico  
The Honorable Jeff M. Witte, Secretary of Agriculture, New Mexico