

April 18, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

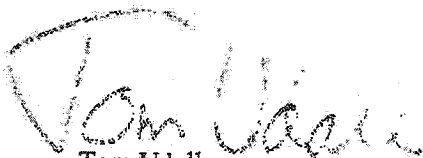
Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to express my concerns about the possible opening of a horse slaughter plant in New Mexico, and to stress the continued opposition of many of my constituents to the proposed plant and to the slaughter of horses for human consumption. It is also notable that this proposed plant is opposed by the New Mexico Governor and the New Mexico Attorney General who has grave concerns over the health risks of the products of this plant.

I share many of my constituents concerns about the difficulty of humanely slaughtering a horse, and the potential health risks that horsemeat poses because these animals are not raised for human consumption. There is no domestic demand for horsemeat, and it is questionable whether slaughterhouses are a humane solution to the problem of abandoned or neglected horses. As you know, USDA is currently suffering funding difficulties under budget sequestration to manage its existing responsibilities for inspecting slaughterhouses. Adding an additional inspection burden at this time could make a bad situation worse for existing producers who supply the domestic consumer market.

As you consider the application to open the horse slaughter plant in Roswell, New Mexico, I would encourage your careful and thorough review if the situation. I would further request an update on the status of the application, the capacity of the plant to provide humane treatment of the horses, the ability to conduct full screening for the range of drugs that may be given to horses, and the capacity of USDA to fund the necessary inspections.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall  
United States Senator

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