

Ms. Donna Zervos
[REDACTED]

JUN 05 2012

Dear Ms. Zervos:

Thank you for your letter of May 1, 2012, to the Department of Agriculture (USDA), regarding your concerns about horse slaughter. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has been asked to provide you with a response.

FSIS is the public health regulatory agency in the USDA responsible for ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. FSIS enforces the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act, which require Federal inspection and regulation of meat, poultry, and processed egg products prepared for distribution in commerce for use as human food.

Currently there are no facilities approved for horse slaughter in the United States. In November 2011, Congress lifted the ban on using funds for horse slaughter inspection. One establishment, located in New Mexico, has applied for a grant of inspection exclusively for equine. FSIS is currently reviewing that application. However, given that the Agency last conducted a horse inspection 6 years ago, FSIS has determined that despite the congressional decision to lift the ban, the Agency will require time to update its testing and inspection processes and methods before it is fully able to develop a future inspection regimen.

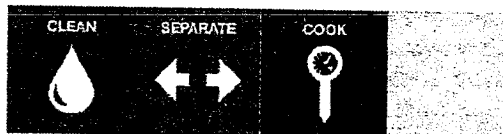
Just as we do for all amenable species, FSIS would screen horses for drug residues not suitable for human consumption and would ensure compliance with all relevant statutes and regulations, including statutes and regulations requiring humane handling.

Thank you again for writing. More information about food safety can be found on the FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Rachel Edelstein
Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development



Check your Steps at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/>