



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Washington, D. C.
20250

April 18, 2012

Mr. Robert K. Bycroft
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Bycroft:

Thank you for your letter of April 11, 2012, to the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Administrator, requesting that FSIS prevent former companion, working, competition, and wild horses from being used as human food. You raise the concern that drugs given to horses throughout their lives are banned by the Food and Drug Administration for animals used for food or are potentially dangerous to humans. I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

FSIS is the public health regulatory agency in the Department of Agriculture 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. FSIS statutory authority covers those facilities that are legally licensed to operate.

FSIS also is responsible for enforcing the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which requires that all livestock, including cattle, sheep, swine, and goats, horses, mules, and other equines, at federally inspected establishments be handled and slaughtered in a humane way. Humane methods of handling and slaughtering livestock prevent needless suffering of animals and result in safer and better working conditions for employees in slaughter establishments.

You are probably aware that, since the passage of the Fiscal Year 2006 Appropriations Act, when Congress prohibited the use of funds for FSIS inspection of horses for human food, there have been significant changes in how FSIS carries out its inspection processes, in the methodologies and protocols for residue testing, and in the regulations and standards of other countries for importing processed horsemeat. Reinstating horse slaughter and horse processing in inspection and regulatory environments that have changed significantly during the past 6 years requires that FSIS reviews its processes and programs, and that it works with the public, with other agencies that deal with a range of issues from animal drug use to environmental health, and with U.S. export partners, to ensure that product entering commerce is adequately tested and to protect public health.

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Please be advised that selling and eating horse meat is legal in the United States, as long as it is labeled clearly, and the horses are slaughtered at federally inspected establishments. At this time, FSIS is not aware of any federally inspected establishments approved to slaughter horses.

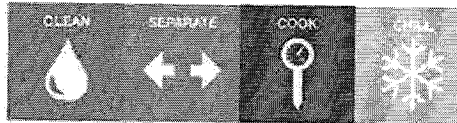
For more information about the humane handling of livestock, please visit FSIS' Web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Humane_Methods_of_Slaughter/index.asp.

Thank you again for writing, and for your concerns.

Sincerely,



Daniel L. Engeljohn, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development



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