



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Washington, D. C.
20250

Ms. Grace Cantonzaro
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Cantonzaro:

Thank you for your letter of February 12, 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. I sincerely regret the delay in responding. FSIS just received your letter.

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.

FSIS also is responsible for enforcing the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA), which requires that all livestock at federally inspected establishments be handled and slaughtered in a humane way. Humane methods of handling and slaughtering livestock prevent needless suffering of animals.

Currently there are no facilities approved for horse slaughter in the United States.

Following a decision by Congress in November 2011 to lift the ban on horse slaughter, two establishments, one located in New Mexico and one in Missouri, have applied for a grant of inspection exclusively for equine slaughter. FSIS is currently reviewing those applications.

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 a significant amount of time to update its testing and inspection processes and methods before it is fully able to develop a future inspection regimen.

You may wish to bring your concerns to the attention of your elected representatives. Only Congress can change the laws. FSIS is responsible for carrying out and enforcing the food safety laws that Congress writes, but FSIS does not introduce bills or write statutory laws. You can find contact information for your Senators and Representatives at

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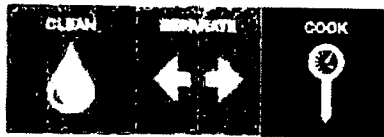
<http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>. If you are unsure of your congressional district, you can find it by using your home zip code at <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>.

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

Sincerely,



for Rachel A. Edelstein
Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development



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