



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Washington, D. C.
20250

April 12, 2012

Ms. Amanda Gray
[REDACTED]@aol.com

Dear Ms. Gray:

Thank you for your e-mail of April 11, 2012, to Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack, expressing your concerns about horse slaughter. Your letter has been forwarded to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) for a response, and I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

FSIS is the public health regulatory agency in 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 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.

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/>

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Information: Previously approved horse slaughter language 7214617.

B. Carson, 4/12/12

Rcardwell, ecims deputy director 4/12/12