



United States Department of Agriculture

JUN 5 2013

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable James P. Moran  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2252 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Moran:

Thank you for your letter of March 21, 2013, regarding horse slaughter. I appreciate the opportunity to address your questions, and I apologize for the delayed response.

I appreciate your passion for the humane treatment of animals and your position on this issue. The President's fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget proposal supports reinstating the ban on the antemortem inspection of horses at slaughter.

Starting in FY 2006, Congress included language in our annual appropriations bills prohibiting the Department of Agriculture (USDA) from using funds for the salaries and expenses of personnel to provide antemortem inspection of horses at slaughter. Language imposing the ban, however, was not included in legislation passed that provided funding for FY 2012 and 2013. We are, therefore, proceeding with due diligence in preparing to implement horse slaughter inspection, consistent with our statutory and regulatory responsibilities.

You asked specifically about the estimated expenditures required to reinstate a USDA horse slaughter inspection program. There is a one-time initial cost to establish the horse slaughter inspection program, as well as recurring costs. In FY 2013, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) incurred one-time costs of approximately \$287,250. This encompasses expenditures of \$275,250 for extending existing residue testing methods to horse tissue, as well as \$12,000 for adapting the current system to accommodate horse slaughter inspection.

Annual recurring costs will include both fixed and variable costs. Approximate annual fixed costs for maintaining the testing regimen for horse tissue are estimated at \$128,450. The remainder of the recurring costs will be based on the number of approved equine slaughter establishments, the number of days each establishment will perform slaughter, and the number of horses slaughtered and tissue samples required.

Based on an existing application for an equine Grant of Inspection, USDA's FSIS estimates that the annual expenditures required by the Agency for such a program at this particular establishment will be approximately \$404,645. This total includes estimates of \$101,078 for inspector labor and \$3,567 for training annually. This total also includes the estimated annual cost for tissue sampling and testing, which is performed weekly, at \$300,000. Again, this recurring cost estimate is for an individual establishment and is based on that establishment's anticipated volume of horses slaughtered and days of operation. If the program expands to include more establishments, the costs will increase.

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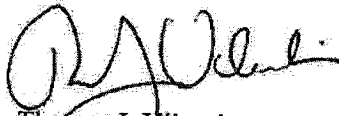
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The costs also could change if there are modifications in the future to requirements for FSIS to validate and implement additional sampling methods, or increases or decreases in an establishment's processing volume or days of operation.

You also asked for details on creating a traceability program for horses. USDA intends to use the traceability program for equines that is already in place for other livestock, as outlined in Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 320. Finally, regarding a plan for individual residue testing of meat from each slaughtered horse, FSIS plans to extend its existing sampling regimen to horse meat, including any additional methods, as this regimen has proven effective for testing the range of products from species under the Agency's jurisdiction.

Thank you again for your letter, and for your interest in this issue. If you have further questions, or if we can be of additional assistance, please have a member of your staff contact Brian Baenig, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, at (202) 720-7095.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary