

The undersigned support:

House Bill No. 418 A bill for an act entitled: "An act authorizing investor-owned equine slaughter for processing facilities; prohibiting a court from granting an injunction to stop or delay the construction of an equine slaughter or processing facility based on legal challenges or appeals of a permit, license, certificate, or other approval issued in conjunction with environmental laws; setting bonding requirements; and amending sections of the MCA.

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HB 418 Horse Slaughter Bill—Senator Ed Butcher—February 19, 2009

Introduction—Linda Newman WIFE

--I am a proponent of HB 418 in favor of bringing back a needed facility to dispose of cull horses.

--My family and I have owned horses mainly used for ranch work all of my life, so I've been through about 3 "horse" generations, so-to-speak. I've seen them succumb to so-called "natural" deaths on the ranch—of which, I might mention was anything but humane. When they lose their teeth and can no longer eat—they tend to slowly starve to death—in my way of thinking, a terrible way to die.

--Most people I know buy or raise horses for a specific purpose—they use them for working cattle, rodeoing, competing in horse shows, or for just leisure riding. When a horse no longer fits into the regimen for which he was intended, we had the option of taking them to market for someone else to purchase. When we had the Horse Slaughter Plants, we at least had a market for these cull horses. Since their closing, our cull horse market is basically non-existent. Some stockyards are charging owners \$125 for each horse brought in to cover selling charges in case the horse doesn't net that much when sold!

--In our case, we usually sold cull horses, so we could use that money to buy horses that fit into our scheme of things for whatever purpose we needed at the time. In the present situation, there is no monetary gain from selling cull horses, so to buy a replacement is just that more expensive. We've also raised a lot of horses, and some of them have turned out to be great and others just didn't have what it takes, some, for some reason or other got hurt or crippled and didn't thoroughly recover—but, again, there is no market for culling those either.

--I have a feeling that this is just the beginning of a trend—to try to make it illegal to kill any animal and what better animal to start with other than the dog or cat—is the horse, since most people get very attached to their horses and opponents know that they are appealing to sentiment and have apparently been successful, thus far, by getting our US plants shut down. If they succeed with horses, what's next—cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens?? After all we will still have vegetables and fruits to eat!

--I also have the feeling that if we could think of a more humane name for the plants, we might be better off—after all, the connotation "slaughter" really doesn't help our cause! The term just doesn't paint a "humane" picture. I really don't know how the horses are killed in a plant, but I assume they are shot or euthanized in the same way they would be "put down" at any other location—ie, ranch, veterinary clinic, etc. So, I really don't see the difference—when they are dead they are dead. It's the aftermath that seems to be disturbing to the opponents. There is a strong demand for horse flesh and other parts internationally, so why should the US be denied this market.

--Also, people are getting all upset that people are "abandoning" their horses, well in our tough economic times with layoffs, etc., many people are finding themselves strapped and unable to stay in their homes or feed their families. If they have a horse and can't afford to feed them or have them euthanized or have the money to pay the "selling costs" or funds to pay the livestock tax on them, then what choice do they have?

--In one article that I read, a lady opposing horse plants suggested that if we have a horse we don't want, just shoot it and donate it to the local zoo to feed the zoo animals. Wow—what a novel thought—what is the difference of taking it to a processing plant and make it into dog food to feed our own pet dogs?

--Then we have "horse sanctuaries"—they are already overflowing and begging for money to help feed them—who's going to get stuck footing that bill—the taxpayers, of course—and since we are all taxpayers, we will be getting a "double whammy".

--So for these reasons, I urge you to pass this bill and stop this "trend" before it really gets out of hand.

Linda Newman
Montana State President
Women Involved in Farm Economics