
Judiciary Committee

HB 2327

Title: An act relating to the protection of horses and other equines from slaughter for human consumption.

Brief Description: Concerning the slaughter of horses and other equines for human consumption.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Kuderer, McCabe, Bergquist, Stanford, Pollet and Moscoso.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that engaging in certain activities involving the slaughter, possession, and trade of horses or horse meat for human consumption is a Class C felony.
- Makes it illegal for any person to transport, possess, purchase, sell, offer to sell, or have on his or her premises horse meat intended for human consumption or for any other purpose unless certain exceptions apply.
- Modifies laws governing the disposal of dead animals to no longer include horses, mules, and asses.

Hearing Date: 2/12/16

Staff: Kelly Holler (786-7290) and Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

Horse Slaughter in the United States.

Several bills have been introduced at the federal level to expressly prohibit the slaughter and export of horses for human consumption in the United States (U.S.), but no such legislation has become law.

While the sale of horsemeat for human consumption is not explicitly outlawed in the U.S., horses cannot be slaughtered for human consumption in any slaughterhouse in the U.S. Facilities

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slaughtering animals for human consumption must be regulated and overseen by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspectors, and Congress eliminated funding for USDA inspections of horse slaughterhouses in 2006. This action halted U.S. production of horsemeat for human consumption, and in 2007, the last remaining horse slaughterhouse in the country was closed.

In the years after 2006, two annual federal budgets have authorized the use of funds for USDA inspections of horse slaughterhouses, but no funds were used for this purpose and no slaughterhouses were opened or operational. In 2014, and in each subsequent annual budget, Congress again passed the ban on funding of USDA inspections of horse slaughter facilities.

State Bans on the Slaughter of Horses for Human Consumption.

There is no prohibition on the consumption of horse meat by humans in Washington, and the consumption of horse by humans is still legal in most states.

Several states, including Illinois, Texas, California, and New Jersey, have passed laws banning and criminalizing the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

Washington Law Regulating Disposal of Dead Animals.

The chapter governing disposal of dead animals provides for the licensing of rendering plants and independent collectors, and establishes standards for licenses in the handling and disposal of dead animals. A "dead animal" is defined under the chapter as the body of a "meat food animal," which in turn is defined as cattle, horses, mules, asses, swine, sheep, and goats. A "rendering plant" is a place where dead animals are processed for the purpose of obtaining the hide, skin, grease residue, or any other by-product. An "independent collector" is any person who is equipped and licensed to transport dead animals or packing house refuse to a rendering plant but does not own a rendering plant in Washington.

In addition to licensing provisions, the chapter states that it is unlawful for a person to sell, offer for sale, or give away a dead animal along a public land or roadway not belonging to the person unless the person has a rendering plant or independent collector license.

The chapter also addresses possession of, and commercial transactions related to, horse meat. It is unlawful to transport, sell, offer to sell, or have on one's premises horse meat for other than human consumption unless it has been decharacterized according to standards established by the Department of Agriculture. This law does not apply to:

- carcasses slaughtered by a farmer for consumption on his or her own ranch;
- carcasses in the possession of licensed independent collectors or rendering plants; or
- canned horse meat meeting U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry regulations.

Summary of Bill:

Animal cruelty laws are amended to establish that it is a Class C felony for any person to:

- slaughter a horse if that person knows or should know that any of the meat from the slaughtered animal is intended to be used for human consumption;
- possess, purchase, barter, or sell privately; purchase, barter, or sell at retail; exhibit for barter or sale; or possess or transport with the intent to barter or sell horses or horse meat

- if that person knows or should know that the horse or its meat will be used for human consumption; or
- transport a horse or horse meat if that person knows or should know that it is intended for human consumption.

Each violation of this section constitutes a separate offense. Furthermore, a separate violation is established for every horse involved in a violation of this section.

The statute governing possession of, and commercial transactions related to, horse meat is amended, such that it is unlawful to transport, possess, purchase, sell, offer to sell, or have on his or her premises horse meat intended for human consumption or any other purpose unless it has been decharacterized according to standards established by the state veterinarian. However, this law does not apply to:

- carcasses slaughtered by a farmer for consumption on his or her own ranch;
- carcasses in the possession of licensed independent collectors or rendering plants;
- canned horse meat meeting U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry regulations.

The definition of "meat food animal" in the chapter governing disposal of dead animals and licensure of rendering plants and independent collectors is modified to remove horses, mules, and asses. As a result, provisions covering disposal of dead animals under this chapter no longer include horses, mules, and asses.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.