

What You Didn't Know about Canada's Horse Federations

Did you know that your provincial horse federation supports and endorses the slaughter of North American horses?

Back to 2008

In June 2008, the [Canadian Horse Defence Coalition \(CHDC\)](#) released its "[Black Beauty Betrayed](#)" report on Natural Valley Farms (NVF) horse slaughter plant in Saskatchewan that provided evidence of horses subjected to cruel handling and poor slaughter practices, resulting in immense suffering. Also, it proved that transportation laws were being broken, as well that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) was not enforcing the rules mandated by federal regulations.

In the October 2008 edition of the *Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF)* magazine *WHOA*, President (then Vice-President) Gary Yaghdjian wrote the article on page 46, "[The Truth About Horse Slaughter in Canada](#)". This was in response to the disturbing findings revealed at Natural Valley Farms. It begins with this message, "With the advent of animal activist activity here in Canada, the OEF has been networking with its sister federations and provincial Farm Animal Councils to form the [Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada \(HWAC\)](#). Without members' input, Canada's provincial horse federations became members of this newly formed alliance in a quick, seamless fashion.

First we'll address the article, and then we'd like to explore this horse welfare organization further.

It should be noted first that Mr. Yaghdjian's group visit to NVF was a controlled, announced visit. True working conditions were not observed on that day, whereas the footage obtained in April 2008 was captured "real time", on a normal production day.

On page 47 he states, "Elevated outside this chamber was a highly-trained and skilled operator who waits until the horse is in exactly the right position before he administers the stun gun. This procedure instantly drops the horse to the ground and renders it senseless. Two other staff members monitor the horse to ensure that it is, indeed, insensible. If there is any doubt whatsoever of insensibility, the stun gun is re-administered. Within 45 seconds of this, the animal is hoisted and bled out in order to empty the brain and the heart of blood, thus ensuring death."

While this scenario may have been observed during this controlled visit, at no time during the footage captured at NVF during actual kill days, were there two workers on hand to ensure horses were rendered senseless.

From pages 13 and 14 from *Black Beauty Betrayed*, "These orders to continually speed up the kill line were almost always followed with an error being made by the captive bolt pistol operator. For example, immediately after he was told "Hey – speed it up you guys!" a horse who had her head in the head stanchion was hit with the captive bolt pistol resulting in the horse's head becoming lodged. In an attempt to prevent slowing down the kill line, the captive bolt pistol operator repeatedly kicked the horse (who appeared to be regaining consciousness) in the face."

"Workers are expected to kill 30 horses every hour meaning one horse every two minutes. The kill day begins at approximately 7:00 am and ends at 3:30 pm. Processing of the horses begins immediately after the first kill and continues past kill end time."

"The majority of the horses were so frightened in the kill pen that they trembled to the point of losing their footing and fell. Almost all flinched away from the captive bolt pistol and required a cane be placed under their chins in an attempt to steady their heads. The bloody floor of the kill pen did not provide any traction and the majority of the horses were shod, resulting in a very slippery surface for them to stand on. Many shook and trembled so violently it almost appeared as though the footage was on fast forward. Some of the horses pawed to get out of the kill pen. Many frantically searched for an escape, the terror clear in their eyes and bodies. The fear these horses experience cannot be overstated."

"Confirming what we had privately been told by some CFIA inspectors and veterinarians, no CFIA inspectors or veterinarians were ever present to oversee the actual killing of the horses. The only people present were the two captive bolt pistol operators (the backup operator pushed horses into the kill pen when not shooting them) and two hangers who would suspend the horses by a rear leg."

This description of horses terrified and suffering, from actual footage obtained, is a far cry from the idyllic description of a calm, settling environment that horses seemed to go willingly to their deaths, as described by Mr. Yaghdijan's glowing article.

Of great interest and in contrast to this OEF article, in late 2008 NVF was closed by the CFIA due to food safety concerns. It was learned about that time also, that NVF was heavily in debt. By February 2009, the plant was closed. Also, the CHDC had opened a police file at the Broadview, Saskatchewan RCMP detachment. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is an offence to wilfully cause unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to an animal. The film evidence obtained provided proof that an investigation was in order, as several horses were beaten wilfully while in the kill box, and five different Acts covering everything from animal welfare, transport of horses, humane slaughtering and environmental regulations were violated. More than a year later, in late 2009, a response was finally received from the RCMP. In their letter to the CHDC, workplace inconsistencies and poor practices were acknowledged, however they were closing their file due to the closure of Natural Valley Farms. It also stated any concerns regarding worker misconduct will have to be taken to the CFIA.

So the chapter on NVF was closed, yet no justice was done for the thousands of horses that suffered there. Meantime, horse slaughter continued at the remaining six federally licensed Canadian plants.

Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada

We researched further into this named "horse welfare" organization, the *Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada*. What we found dismays and alarms us.

At first glance, this group appears to genuinely be a horse protection group. Their website opens with the message "Promoting the humane handling of horses throughout all their life stages". Also, "The Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada is an alliance of provincial equine organizations and farm animal care groups whose purpose is the dissemination of correct information related to the Canadian horse industry to horse owners and the general public." So are they promoting humane handling of horses, or is their purpose to convey "correct information" related to the Canadian horse industry? Looking more closely at their website, it is not hard to determine is the latter which is their main purpose.

The [partners listed](#) for the HWAC include 9 provincial horse federations, 5 provincial farm animal councils, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, CFIA, the Saskatchewan SPCA, the Canadian Quarter Horse Association, J. Woods Livestock Services, North America Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERC) a non-profit association of equine ranchers associated with the PMU industry, and Bouvry Exports - North America's largest horse slaughter plant located in Alberta.

The Board of Directors includes members from these partner groups. An impressive list of associations, industry, government agencies and companies that would appear to have a vested interest in maintaining Canada's horse slaughter industry. Yet their moniker is horse welfare.

Link to Pro-Slaughter U.S. Horse Groups

Of particular interest about this group, is their close link with the U.S. based pro-horse slaughter group *United Organizations of the Horse*. From their website: "The United Organizations of the Horse (UOH) was formed to address two key issues:

1. To restore humane and regulated horse slaughter in the U.S.; and
2. To control the overpopulation of wild and feral horses on federal, state, tribal, and private lands."

"The organization has been set up primarily for political action, but is now moving into the pragmatic implementation of programs to benefit the equine industry and horse people of the United States."

"The United Organizations of the Horse is led by founder and executive director, Sue Wallis, backed up by a Founding Leadership Team that includes twenty-four prominent horsemen, horsewomen, and equine professionals from all parts of the nation, and all walks of the horse world. Wallis is a rancher, legislator, and nonprofit administrator who lives in northern Wyoming."

This fringe organization and their founder Sue Wallis (Republican, U.S. House of Representatives, Wyoming) has been successful in passing State legislation, to enable Wyoming to open the first U.S. horse slaughter plant since 2007, when the last plant was closed in Illinois.

One of the UOH's latest initiatives is the "*Horse Rescue, Rejuvenation and Slaughter*" program, "A program which seeks to rescue and rejuvenate starving and neglected horses; provide a comprehensive program of evaluation, training, and retraining of abandoned and donated horses; and provide a quick, painless death through humane slaughter while well cared for and in good condition to those horses who remain unusable or unneeded."

The slaughter program vision: "For those horses who have lived past their useful life, who are unsound, or dangerous and untrainable, a humane system of slaughter through equipment and management principles approved by Dr. Temple Grandin will be utilized to provide a quick, clean death with a minimum of stress and pain. Every part of the horse will be put to good purposes from providing nourishing, high quality meat to the hungry and to those who choose to buy it for their tables, to zoo diets for big cats and other carnivores, to canned pet food. Horse hide is very valuable as rawhide and as leather. Otherwise unusable parts will be rendered to essential oil and byproducts. Some parts can be used for both human and veterinary medicine. Even the hair can be used."

There is another pro-slaughter horse group closely linked to the UOH. They are the *United Horsemen's Front* <http://www.unitedhorsemensfront.org/> . From their website: "The United Horsemen's Front promotes horse welfare and the health of the horse industry by providing accurate, timely information about the unintended consequences of the ban on equine processing in the United States. The United Horsemen's Front seeks to unify our country's horsemen and -women in our common goal: achieving humane and realistic solutions to the unwanted horse problem from the perspective of experienced horse people who have the best interest of the horse at heart."

"The United Horsemen's Front has joined with the United Organizations of the Horse (UOH), an alliance of equine groups and individuals dedicated to the humane treatment of horses from birth to death."

In January 2010, the UOH published a boycott list "calling for the boycott of celebrities supporting HSUS/PETA and their many offshoots."
<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs066/1102207109251/archive/1102964180002.html>

This extensive list includes the U.S. Equestrian Federation, Pat Parelli, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crowe, Paul McCartney, Viggo Mortensen, and an exhaustive list of actors, singers and organizations such as Wild Horse Advocates and Habitat for Horses.

The UOH January news release goes on to say: "The UOH is working to revive the devastated horse economy and providing a positive solution to the problem of excess wild and domestic horses by restoring the option of humane and regulated horse processing in the US. This will supply wholesome meat to the hungry and a viable export market, increase the value of all horses, and create thousands of jobs. UOH is also working to support the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) efforts to control the number of wild horses on federal lands, and oppose the use of any federal dollars to pay for the upkeep of wild horses in private feedlots and holding facilities off of the federally designated horse management areas as an unconstitutional and inappropriate use of federal funds to establish a welfare entitlement program for animals."

In another January 2010 news release:

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs066/1102207109251/archive/1102919513399.html>

addressing the wild mustangs gathers currently taking place in the U.S., the UOH states:

"Besides removing the excess horses to reassert a proper balance on the ranges, the UOH advocates the BLM adhere to responsible management practices such as:

- Restore humane and regulated equine processing facilities, to provide federal, state, and local agencies; tribal groups and the general public an option for humane disposal of unwanted excess horses, without needless taxpayer expense or needless suffering for horses otherwise likely to face starvation or abandonment."

In other words, the United Organizations of the Horse and the United Horsemen's Front are promoting and creating means to slaughter not only America's domestic horses, but also their wild mustangs.

This April 28, 2010 Wyoming News article

http://www.wyomingnews.com/articles/2010/04/28/news/19local_04-28-10.txt states: "Rep. Sue Wallis (R-Recluse) said the nonprofit United Organizations of the Horse would accept donated horses, either from the Wyoming Livestock Board or individuals. She referenced a lot of about 230 feral horses the Wyoming Livestock Board sold recently for \$1 each during a public sale in Rock Springs.

Horses would be evaluated and either sent to rehabilitation, rejuvenation or slaughter, according

to Wallis. "We think that we will probably work up to the point where we're killing 20 horses a day," she said.

So we take you back to the question at the beginning. **Did you know that your provincial horse federation supports and endorses the slaughter of North American horses?**

Your provincial horse federation is a member of the Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada (HWAC). Their executive members sit on the HWAC committees. The HWAC is closely linked to these openly pro-slaughter organizations in the U.S. The only difference with Canada's group is that it is not forthcoming in its mission to promote horse slaughter. All you have to do though is take a closer look.

Forward to 2010

In February 2010, the CHDC received hidden camera footage of horse slaughter practices at Viande Richelieu in Quebec and Bouvry Exports in Alberta - the latter known as the largest exporter of horsemeat in North America. The CHDC released compelling proof in their exposé, "Chambers of Carnage – A Sweeping Undercover Investigation of Canada's Leading Equine Slaughterhouses" that puts into question the effectiveness of the assembly-line slaughter of horses. The evidence demonstrates that both the facilities in Alberta and Quebec fail to meet humane slaughter standards used by the CFIA to audit Canadian slaughterhouses.

The findings of 3 North American veterinarians; Dr. Debi Zimmermann, Dr. Mary Richardson, and Dr. Mel Richardson, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), the BC SPCA and the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) all agree that it is clear that neither the facilities nor the behaviour of the personnel shown are suited to the humane slaughter of horses, and that extreme suffering results for many individual animals.

The footage shows complete hours long video evidence from both operations of hundreds of horses slaughtered, many whose lives did not end swiftly or painlessly. [Dr. Debi Zimmermann's report.](#)

"The horses processed at these slaughterhouses also suffered needless physical injuries, arising from inadequate facility design, shooter inaccuracy, and wilful acts of abuse at the hands of plant personnel. Traumatic injuries were sustained in the following ways:

Slips and Falls

Slips were numerous at both plants, and they increased in frequency as the stun box floor became more and more soiled as the day progressed, as the speed of processing increased, and with repeated bumping of the horses using the side of the chute (Bouvry). Although many horses were seen slipping, 16% of horses at Bouvry actually fell to the ground (often multiple times), and 3% of the horses at Richelieu fell, some falling over and over for up to a minute and a half.

Fractures

Fractured pasterns were noted in 3 horses (#33, 45, 116) and it is likely that horse #17 at Bouvry also sustained a fracture on the leg wrapped with a white flag.

Mis-shots

A significant and unacceptable number of mis-shots, were observed throwing horses violently to the ground, into the sides of the stun box, and some onto their backs. Only a few of these mis-shot horses were afforded a second shot.

Bleed Rail Sensibility

At Bouvry, many horses demonstrated voluntary movements, or obvious rhythmic breathing, upon being suspended. This indicates these horses were likely conscious as they were being hoisted high into the air with one leg bearing their entire weight, and while their necks were slashed on both sides (which entails using a sawing motion of the knife). A full bleed out takes minutes, and as some horses had their feet chopped off within 45 seconds of the throat slash, some horses may also have experienced the pain associated with this procedure as well. At Richelieu, horses were out of view as soon as they were shackled. However, given the shooter's high level of inaccuracy, and the mayhem that was heard emanating from the kill room at times, it is highly likely that horses # 3, 34, 43, 53, and 67 regained consciousness post-stun, and possibly horses #22, 39, and 50 as well."

What was the reaction of the Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada? Bill DesBarres, Executive Committee member and Alberta Equestrian Federation Chair, Breeds & Industry stated to The Western Producer: "I'm not convinced that those pictures were taken at Fort MacLeod. These things are produced by people who have a different agenda.. They are against animal agriculture, period."

http://www.producer.com/fb/WPNEWS/2010/20100408/WPNEWS_20100408.htm

Canada's voice for horse welfare does not express concern for the horses that endured unnecessarily long and painful deaths – instead he denies the footage is authentic!

It is unmistakable that the primary concern and purpose of the HWAC is to sustain and protect Canada's horse slaughter industry.

Do you agree with this mission, shared by our provincial horse federations?

The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition believes that the horse federations of our country should have no political involvement or opinion on the issue of horse slaughter. Yet quite clearly, they have demonstrated they are pro-slaughter.

Have they ever polled their members to ask, so they could take a stance that represents the majority of their membership? The answer is no, they have not.

The truth is, nearly 2/3 of Canadians do not believe in the killing of horses for human consumption. This includes all Canadians, horse owners and non-horse owners alike.

European Union Rules for 2010

There is another important component that concerns this topic - the European Union rules affecting horses destined to slaughter:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/meavia/man/ch17/annexee.shtml>

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/exports/new-requirements-for-export-of-horse-meat-to-the-e/eng/1488311247045/1488311328841>

Effective July 31, 2010, it will be mandatory for all Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspected facilities in Canada engaged in the slaughter of equine for edible purposes to have complete records for all animals (domestic and imported) presented for slaughter. These records will include unique identification for each animal, a record of illness and a record of medical treatments administered to the animal for the six-month period preceding slaughter. The template entitled "Equine Information Document" (EID) shall be used by equine owners for this purpose. (The majority of horsemeat from Canada is exported to Europe.)

The CHDC released a discussion paper on the implications of this program: [What the New European Union Requirements for Imported Equine Meat Will Mean to North America's Horse Industry](#).

Horses that go to slaughter must also meet other certain criteria, including [veterinary drugs not permitted for use in equines slaughtered for food](#).

The list of drugs banned for the entire life of the horse include Phenylbutazone (PBZ) and Clenbuterol, two widely used substances. In fact, Phenylbutazone is so pervasive in the horse world, it is used on virtually on all racehorses, and most sport and companion horses.

Phenylbutazone Toxicity

[Association of phenylbutazone usage with horses bought for slaughter: A public health risk](#) is a recently released medical journal paper by Nicholas Dodman, Nicolas Blondeau, and Ann M. Marini. Excerpt: "Phenylbutazone (PBZ) was marketed in the United States for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and gout in 1952. Serious and often fatal adverse effects such as aplastic anemia and agranulocytosis appeared in the literature within three years of its use (Benjamin et al., 1981; Böttiger and Westerhom, 1973; Cameron et al., 1966; Chaplin, 1986; Deaths due to butazolidin, 1952; Dunn, 1972; Etes and Jacobson, 1953; Hale and DeGruchy, 1960; Leonard, 1953; Mauer, 1995; McCombs, 1958; Nelson et al., 1995; Ramsey and Golde, 1976; Risks of agranulocytosis and aplastic anemia, 1986; Steinberg et al., 1953). The serious adverse effects of PBZ culminated in its unavailability for human use in the United States.

Because of the bone marrow toxicity caused by PBZ in humans, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has set no safe levels of PBZ in animals intended for food and bans the administration of this drug in any horse sent to slaughter for human consumption.

"The scope of the amount of horsemeat that may be contaminated with PBZ can be inferred from the number of rescued horses given race day PBZ. All sixteen of the rescued TB horses on which we obtained Lifetime Past Performance records were given PBZ on race day or within 24 hours of a race."

We have a situation here that has not yet been addressed by our horse federations. We simply will not be able to send our horses to slaughter, whether we agree with the practice or not!

Why aren't the horse federations, industry groups, breed associations and other horse groups addressing this? Why aren't we hearing about incentive programs to promote responsible breeding and horse ownership practices? Why aren't we hearing about subsidizations and funds created to help offset the cost of humane euthanasia for old and sick horses? These programs must become reality - there will be no other choice after July 31st this year!

What can you do?

Let your provincial horse federation know how you feel! Tell them you do not support or agree with their stance to support horse slaughter (and ultimately the boycott of the USEF and the containment and slaughter of wild horses).

Let the horse federations and other horse associations know that they have no choice but to create programs and find solutions that will protect our horses. There will be no available choice to send many of our horses off to slaughter after July 31st this year.

To find your provincial federation please use Google to search. [Equestrian Canada](#) overseas most disciplines in Canada.

Other links:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency on [horse slaughter](#).

[Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society](#).

[National Thoroughbred Racing Association](#).

[Canadian Quarterhorse Association](#).

[American Quarterhorse Association](#).

[N.A. Equine Ranching Information Council](#) (PMU related)

[The Cloud Foundation](#).

Please feel free to contact the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition with your comments to: info@defendhorsescanada.org.