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H.R. 503/ S. 727 THE PREVENTION OF EQUINE CRUELTY ACT OF 2009

Summary:

- Individuals will be fined or imprisoned (or both) for:
 1. Possessing, shipping, transporting, purchasing, selling, delivering, or receiving, in or affecting interstate commerce or foreign commerce, any horse with the *intent* that it is to be slaughtered for human consumption; or
 2. Possessing, shipping, transporting, purchasing, selling, delivering, or receiving, in or affecting interstate commerce or foreign commerce, any horse flesh or carcass or part of a carcass, with the intent that it is to be used for human consumption.

AVMA Position: The AVMA opposes H.R. 503/S. 727

JUSTIFICATION:

The passage of this legislation, without adequate funding or an infrastructure in place to care for unwanted horses, will create a series of unintended consequences that negatively impact the health and welfare of the horse.

The AVMA's primary concerns regarding H.R. 503/S. 727 are:

- **Long-term placement of affected horses.** H.R. 503/S. 727 fail to address how and where unwanted horses will be placed. If these bills are passed, tens of thousands of U.S. horses will need to be placed in alternative homes, or be euthanized and disposed of properly.
 - While there are many equine rescue and retirement facilities providing homes for unwanted horses, their care capacities range from five horses to, in a few cases, a maximum of 1,000 horses. ***The capacity at most facilities, however, is 30 horses or less.***
 - In the first year alone of a processing ban, assuming an average capacity of 30 horses per facility, approximately ***4,697 equine rescue facilities would be needed.*** Based on these numbers, there are currently not enough volunteers or placement opportunities to provide the level of care that will be required annually.
- **Animal Welfare:** While many nonprofit equine rescue facilities are well run, regulations must be put in place to establish standards of care to ensure the humane treatment of these unwanted horses.
- **Funding of care for unwanted horses.** H.R. 503/S.727 does not address the funding required to care for or euthanize and dispose of tens of thousands of horses per year. Assuming an average cost of \$6 per day to provide a horse's basic needs, the funding needed per year, per horse, is approximately \$2,300. This does not include veterinary or hoof care. ***Inadequate funding often creates inadequate care, which is a significant welfare concern for unwanted horses. In fact, there are [news articles](#) across the Nation suggesting increasing numbers of abandoned, neglected, and abused horses.***
http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/unwanted_horses/default.asp
- **Current USDA Authority:** H.R. 503/S. 727 could undermine current USDA efforts to enforce humane transportation standards for horses being transported for the purpose of slaughter. USDA is currently able to assess civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per horse (per violation) of the USDA Slaughter Horse Transport Program. During last year's Judiciary Hearing on similar legislation, Mr. Pacelle, CEO of HSUS, suggested that the predominate animal welfare issue is ***NOT*** the method of euthanasia; but rather, inhumane transportation of horses over long distances that is so egregious. This being said, it is imperative that the USDA can continue to enforce the current statutes and ensure the ***HUMANE*** transportation of horses.

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The AVMA is the recognized voice for the profession, representing over 78,000 member veterinarians. The objective of the AVMA is to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine including its relationship to public health, biological science, and agriculture.