



FVE Position on the need to maintain the status of horses as food-producing animals

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In European Union legislation animals of the Equidae family are considered 'food-producing animals' unless they are declared¹ as not intended for slaughter for human consumption. Once declared as being not intended for slaughter, the status of the animal can never be changed again and the animal is excluded from entering the food chain forever.

In view of on-going discussions to consider all Equidae as companion animals - in other words to end the existing provision allowing horses to be considered as food producing animals - the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe is gravely concerned that such a development will carry great risk for the welfare of Equidae in Europe.

The removal of the option of slaughter for human consumption will create substantial euthanasia and disposal costs for owners at the end of the animal's life and is likely to lead to animals being abandoned, neglected or being placed on international, long-distance transports to slaughter houses outside the EU. The termination of horse slaughter in the USA has resulted in each of these severe, albeit unintended, welfare consequences and FVE considers it essential that Europe learns from such experience.

FVE is concerned about the welfare of Equidae and wishes to emphasize the following points in relation to the availability of slaughter of Equidae for human consumption²:

- FVE recognizes the need for humane slaughter and disposal of horses as a natural consequence and a natural part of keeping horses for sport, pleasure and/or food production.
- FVE expresses concern of the welfare of the horse throughout the entire lifetime of the horse.
- FVE considers consumption of horse meat to be a matter of individual choice.
- FVE believes that horses, for welfare reasons, should be slaughtered as close to the point of origin as possible, keeping transport to a minimum.
- With this in mind, FVE emphasize that every government should provide for horse slaughter facilities within reasonable distance within their country.
- Where transportation is necessary, the horses' welfare should be addressed with priority, taking into account all the regulations addressing the needs of these animals.

In conclusion: FVE strongly believes that in the interest of animal welfare, the current situation - considering horses primarily as food producing animals - must be maintained.

President

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¹ in accordance with [Commission Decision 93/623/EEC of 20 October 1993](#) establishing the identification document (passport) accompanying registered equidae and Commission decision 2000/68/EC of 22 December 1999 amending Decision 93/623/EEC and establishing the identification of equidae for breeding and production

² See also paper developed by the [Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations \(FEEVA\)](#)