

CHDC Calls for Audit of All Canadian Equine Slaughterhouses

Letter to CFIA

Ms. Carole Swan, President, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 59 Camelot Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0Y9

Dr. Brian Evans, Chief Veterinary Officer of Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 59 Camelot Drive, Floor 1, East Room 100, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0Y9

Dear Ms. Swan and Dr. Evans:

In view of the fact that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency initiated a temporary closure of Natural Meat Company in December 2008 due to food safety concerns, our coalition is calling for a complete audit of all equine slaughter plants across Canada. We are concerned that the problems uncovered at the Neudorf plant could be endemic in all facilities that slaughter horses in our country. We are further requesting details surrounding the food safety concerns that caused the December shut-down.

Also, undercover footage taken at Natural Valley Farms in the spring of 2008 revealed numerous animal welfare violations, as verified by Dr. Nicholas Dodman, Animal Behaviourist at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. We are concerned that humane treatment of animals is not occurring at equine slaughterhouses because a fast assembly-line process renders even the most minimal comfort measures impossible. This is why the footage obtained at Natural Valley Farms showed needless, prolonged and severe suffering of equines in the kill box. Please note that the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's definition of humane euthanasia includes this: "...the animal must be rendered irreversibly unconscious as rapidly as possible with the least possible pain, fear, and anxiety..." and "...the experience, training, sensitivity, and compassion of the individual carrying out the procedure are critical." It is clear that humane euthanasia was not being administered at Natural Valley Farms, and we have no reason to believe that any other equine slaughterhouse would have time to ensure that horses die with "the least possible pain, fear and anxiety".

We await your prompt response to our concerns and our request for further information on the Natural Meat Company closure.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Sinikka Crosland, Executive Director