

## A Year in Review And Going Forward into 2009

Review of 2008 and plans for 2009.

**February 2008:** The CHDC reports on the sudden growth of horse slaughter in Canada (after closure of the last U.S. plant in 2007). It's reported that U.S. imports are rising sharply while the number of horses slaughtered in 2007 over 2006 is more than 50% higher, at over 79,000 horses.

In another story, over 100 horses are found starving at an Alberta ranch. Tragically, another 27 are found dead. In collaboration with the Alberta SPCA, 3 Alberta women helped save these horses, mostly Arabians. A new foundation was formed, [Rescue 100](#). People from Canada and around the world open their hearts and wallets to help them rehabilitate and rehome all the horses. A tragedy is turned into an amazing rescue effort.

**March 2008:** The first of two investigative reports on Natural Valley Farms (NVF) horse slaughter plant in Saskatchewan is released. Evidence at the rendering pit raises several areas of animal welfare concerns and improper procedures, including: transportation and slaughter of full term pregnant mares; improper "feeder" labeling of horses, evidence of a known loophole concerning transportation of "slaughter" vs. "feeder" horses; lack of captive bolt holes in many horses' heads; horses arriving at night when no Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspector is on onsite; and continued allowance of double decker trailers.

At this time, prominent animal welfare advocate, Twyla Francois, joins the CHDC as Central Region Director.

**June 2008:** The CHDC had some press coverage prior to this date, but the "Black Beauty Betrayed" investigative report released on NVF slaughter practices, along with CBC's The National exposé on this Saskatchewan slaughter plant, brings horse welfare and slaughter to nationwide prominence. The CHDC conducts a press conference, releasing the report at the offices of well-known Toronto lawyer, Clayton Ruby. On hand to lend credence to the report and offer his comments is renowned co-founder of Veterinarians for Equine Welfare and Tufts University Professor, Dr. Nicholas H. Dodman, DVM.

**July 2008:** H.R. Bill 6598, the "Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act", is introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives. In September 2008, the bill is passed by the Judiciary Committee. Time lapses however before it can be passed by Congress.

The Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada, a pro-slaughter organization, is formed bringing together provincial horse federations, farm industry groups and related companies, to support the industry, the CFIA, and provincial ministries that oversee and sanction Canada's horse slaughter business.

**August 2008:** The CHDC releases an Auction Alert, bringing attention to the risks that horses face, when brought to rural auctions to be sold. The alert includes a listing of each province's auction locations and dates for 2008, as well as emergency contact information for each province.

**October 2008:** The CHDC calls for an investigation into animal welfare violations that were exposed at NVF, including violations of U.S., Canadian and Saskatchewan laws. The CFIA and Saskatchewan SPCA have offered no response to acknowledge or deny the claims against NVF.

The CHDC's Ontario Regional Director joins in the first of several meetings that take place at the offices of the Ontario Livestock Exchange, between auction management, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Affairs, the CHDC and a knowledgeable member of the local horse community. Important horse welfare improvements are discussed including disallowing blind horses through the auction ring, improving horse handling methods, better segregation rules including pen densities and compatibility rules, improved access to food and water, and better monitoring and segregation of pregnant, lame and compromised horses. These discussions remain ongoing, and while some conditions have improved at OLEX, it is a continuing work in progress.

**November 2008:** The Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF) makes its pro-slaughter stance public, by publishing a clearly pro-slaughter biased report on NVF's slaughter operations. In response, the CHDC withdraws its affiliate membership from the OEF.

**December 2008:** The 2009 Canadian Horse Annual of Horse-Canada.com reveals the results of a Horse Publications Group weekly web poll. To the question, "Do you agree with horse slaughter for human consumption?", an impressive majority of 90% voted "No". In 2004, 64% of Canadians polled (representing the general population, not just horse people) indicated that they were opposed to horse slaughter. It is clear that in our society, horses hold a very special status that transcends their use as meat animals.

In another story, just prior to Christmas, a miracle takes place. People from the town of McBride, BC unite to save two starving horses abandoned in the rugged mountains of BC's interior. Concerned citizens literally dig their way to the horses, over a kilometer through

thick snow, in order to lead them to safety. Sundance and Belle continue to recover from their ordeal in a foster home (see pictures and updates at [Falling Star Ranch](#)). In January 2009, the BC SPCA announces the horses will not be returned to the former owner who abandoned them, and is also recommending charges of animal cruelty be laid against him.

We applaud the timely action of those who refused to let Sundance and Belle die in the snowdrifts. This is a heartwarming story of courage, compassion, and conviction. It begs the question: how do we transfer this kind of caring to an existing system where horses are abused and killed by the tens of thousands every year in Canadian slaughterhouses? Indeed, new statistics obtained by the CHDC reveal that 112,887 horses became victims of slaughter in Canada in 2008. This is a 42% increase over 2007, and a 125% increase over 2006.

## Looking Ahead to 2009

The Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act (H.R. 503) is re-introduced in the U.S. House on January 14, 2009 by Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) and Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN). With 61 original cosponsors, this bill prohibiting the sale of horses to slaughter and the export of horses to slaughter, already enjoys strong bipartisan support. The newly appointed Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, has a solid record for animal protection. Americans are once again gearing up to lobby for support of this bill. With the new U.S. government in place, hope is renewed for the horses in 2009.

## Saving Horses One Life at a Time : A New Initiative for 2009

In addition to our on going efforts to end the slaughter of horses in Canada , we are seeking to help facilitate the rescue of individual animals. In the coming months, the CHDC will be collaborating with other organizations and sanctuaries nationwide, in order to enhance the number of horses who can be recovered from auctions and feedlots. Our goal is to increase public awareness regarding the location of various horse rescue facilities across Canada, and the horses they have available. We understand that advertising is expensive and time-consuming for those involved in the hands-on work of caring for horses, so we are venturing to create a database of horse rescues and sanctuaries. At this time we are collecting data on rescue centres across Canada that have horses for adoption. If you, or someone you know rescues and re-homes horses in your local community, please send an e-mail with the information to: [info@defendhorsescanada.org](mailto:info@defendhorsescanada.org)

## Continued Resolve: What Can You Do to Help?

You are likely one of the vast majority of Canadians who oppose the slaughter of our horses for human consumption. You may have already been a supporter in the past. You might have new awareness and concern for the thousands of horses who lose their lives in Canadian slaughterhouses every week. Based on 2008 numbers, that's over 2,100 horses every week!

## Every Action Makes a Difference!

- Gather signatures on a [petition](#) or write to [info@defendhorsescanada.org](mailto:info@defendhorsescanada.org) for a copy. Valid petitions have no age restrictions. A petition needs only 25 valid signatures for a Member of Parliament to present it in the House of Commons. See this [link](#) for guidelines on preparing petitions. Feel free to contact the CHDC about how to prepare for a meeting with your Member of Parliament. Go to this [link](#) to find your MP.
- Write to the agencies that oversee this business, the Minister of Agriculture and the CFIA, to express your opposition to horse slaughter. Contact details and key points of discussion are at [Do It Now!](#)
- Research online and network with friends and acquaintances, in person or online through Facebook on the issues.
- Find your local horse rescues, and offer to help by volunteering or giving financial support.
- Download the CHDC's [flyer](#) at and distribute through friends and acquaintances, tack shops, pet stores, special events, stables: wherever you can think of! Ask people to get involved if they care!
- Find out the locations of your local livestock and horse auctions, and take the time to attend them to ensure that someone is looking out for the animals. Go to this CHDC [link](#) to download a copy of the Emergency Contact List for reporting animal cruelty.
- If you're planning to adopt or buy a horse, consider finding one through a rescue, horse auction, or from a retirement foundation.

The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition welcomes written accounts about your efforts to help the horses. Please keep us informed - we'd love to hear from you!