



For Immediate Release

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Noem: GAO Confirms Problems With Horse Processing Restrictions

WASHINGTON (June 23, 2011) – U.S. Representative Kristi Noem (R-SD) responded to a recently released Government Accountability Office report on horse welfare and slaughter saying that it confirms the fact that there are significant problems with the current restrictions.

"This report confirms what most ranchers already know. The ending of horse slaughter and processing here in the United States has increased neglect and abandonment and depressed horse prices," said Noem.

The last horse processing facilities in Texas and Illinois closed in 2007, thus ending all processing in the U.S. This was the result of Congress stripping the USDA of funding for food safety inspections at processing plants. The USDA continued to provide inspections on a fee-for-service basis until a federal judge ruled against the arrangement. Since then horses have been transported to Mexico and Canada for processing.

The GAO report explains that from 2006 to 2010 the number of horses exported to Mexican processing plants rose 660%. The number of horses exported to Canada for processing increased 148% during the same time period. Additionally, the report said, "closing domestic horse slaughtering facilities significantly and negatively affected lower-to-medium priced horses by 8 to 21 percent."

The GAO also said that while comprehensive national data was unavailable, state, local government, and animal welfare organizations report a rise in investigations for horse neglect and more abandoned horses since 2007.

Noem concluded, "While opponents of horse slaughter here in the U.S. claim they are acting in the name of humane horse treatment, their policies are in fact adding to the inhumane treatment of horses.

"I hope this new GAO report makes slaughter opponents reassess their position."

The full report can be read [here](#).

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