A tired racehorse stands in the crossties and reality sets in for his connections. The gelding can’t physically race any longer. His problems prevent him from being re-trained in another discipline. As a gelding he has no breeding value. His demeanour is such that he would be unsuitable as a companion horse. Thus the question arises - what do you do with an unwanted horse?

Before you decide to send the horse off to auction or for meat processing, you need to become informed on the latest directive from the Canadian government. On January 28 of this year the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced the implementation of a new Meat Hygiene Directive that affects all horses both domestic and imported which may impact options and the salvage value of the horse.

NEW RULES FOR THE UNWANTED EQUINE

The subject of horse slaughter has been a hot topic of debate in North America for many years and the subject has become more complicated with new rules being introduced in Canada later this year.

By Anna Meyers
As of July 31, slaughter facilities will only be allowed to process horses that have complete health records dating back six months. Horses being sent to or sold for meat processing from that day forward must have records documenting all medications administered from February 1, 2010 and forward. To help horse owners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has created an Equine Identification Document that can be printed from the CFIA website at: http://www.inspection.gc.ca

The Equine Identification Document (EID) has several elements:
• Identification information similar to what is currently submitted to Standardbred Canada with the addition of picture identification;
• Record of diagnosed illnesses;
• Records of veterinary drugs or vaccines given that are not permitted for use in food animals;
• Records of veterinary drugs or vaccines given with known withdrawal times;
• Records of all other drugs or vaccines administered;
• Owner declaration.

As it stands, there are three different lists that have or will be generated (and could be subject to change) and can be referred to at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) website cited.

It currently lists medications that are not permitted for use in horses slaughtered for food. Many are common and effective drugs used to treat a multitude of conditions. Some medications that appear on the list include but are not limited to BNP® and BNP® ophthalmic ointments used to treat eye conditions, clenbuterol (Ventipulmin® Solution or Syrup) primarily used as a bronchodilator, stanozolol or boldenone (Equipoise®) anabolic steroids, cloramphenicol, nitrofurans such as nitrofurazone or furacin used as a topical antibiotics, estradiol (a female hormone), and phenylbutazone products such as Butazone® also commonly used as an anti-arthritic or anti-inflammatory drugs.

Again, it is important to distinguish that these products are not banned for use from a medical perspective but simply may disqualify a horse to be eligible for meat production. At this time, the CFIA is indicating that the Equine Identification Document will require that horses have not been treated with non-permitted drugs during six months prior to slaughter. However, it is important to note that a longer certification period may eventually be required.

A second list of ‘Essential Veterinary Drugs’ permitted in equine intended for food production but requiring a six month withdrawal also appears on the CFIA website. Drugs that appear on this list include but are not limited to: acepromazine (Atravet®) commonly used for sedation as well as propofol (Diprivan® the drug allegedly used by Michael Jackson), ephedrine or antihistamines used to relieve respiratory congestion, analgesics

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fentanyl, buprenorphine and morphine, anti-antimicrobials ticarcillin and amikacin, the common EPM (Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis), medication pyrimethamine and anti-fungals such as griseofulvin, ketoconazole and miconazole.

A third list of veterinary drugs for use in horses intended for food production for which withdrawal times have been established is currently being worked on and should be available by April.

There are many layers and perspectives to this issue and many implications. Let’s first examine why and how this directive came to be.

HORSE MEAT AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

While horse meat consumption is not readily acceptable in most Canadian cultures, it is accepted and highly sought after in many European cultures. Horse meat is considered to be a lean, iron-rich red meat that is low in fat and cholesterol and is typically a more economical purchase than beef or pork. It is popular in European countries like Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria as well as many Asian and South American countries.

Generally speaking, it is thought that horse meat processed in North America is of better quality due to the nutrition and overall body condition of animals processed. As well, horse meat increased in popularity particularly in Europe with the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease) and foot and mouth epidemics that occurred in the United Kingdom during the last two decades. Especially since there is a causal association between a human disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and BSE outbreak in cattle.

“In actual fact, we are a country that has denied that horses go for meat but when the BSE crisis hit, horses were the largest by weight meat export in Canada.” – Dr. Mary Bell

There is no doubt that the horse meat processing industry in Canada has grown substantially over the last few years.

In 2005 and 2006, approximately 50,000 horses each year were slaughtered in Canada. In late 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. As a result, horse slaughter plants (in the U.S.) began to close their doors with the last one closing in September 2007.

Many horses that were once sent to or sold for processing in the United States are now transported to Canada or Mexico to slaughter. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada statistics back this up and show horse slaughter numbers rose to 79,613 in 2007 which represented an increase of 58.5 per cent over the previous year with approximately 41 per cent being imported from the United States to Canada for slaughter.
In 2008, the number of horses slaughtered in Canada rose to 112,957, a 41.9 per cent increase over 2007 totals. USDA export statistics show a total of 77,073 horses being brought in for slaughter from the United States. This represents 68.2 per cent of the total horses slaughtered in our country. Trends for the first half of 2009 show that the number of horses slaughtered is basically on par with what was reported monthly in 2008.

“The issue I see right now is the dumping issue from the United States that’s my primary concern. There are 100,000 horses coming from over the border which is more than our entire production,” declares Edward Kendall, an Equine Canada representative.

To have a better understanding of the impact that the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act had on the Canadian horse meat processing industry, consider that in 2006 there were only three federally inspected plants that produced horse meat across Canada. Today there are six: one in British Columbia, two in Alberta, one in Ontario and two based in Quebec.

A surprising figure reveals that annual meat exports primarily for European food markets exceeds $60 million. As well, domestic consumption of horse meat averages about 300 tonnes annually or 10 to 20 per cent of the total meat produced.

NEW FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN EUROPE

In April of 2009, the European Commission (EC) informed all countries which export horse meat to the European Union, that new food safety requirements would be required to ensure that slaughtered horses had not been treated with substances prohibited by the European Commission during their lifetime, and that the meat be safe for consumption. In other words, animals entering Europe who might at some point enter the food chain had to adhere to the same regulations as European producers.

The European Commission (EC) proposed a three year transition period during which minimum measures such as providing health records to cover treatments given the last six months prior to slaughter be implemented.

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The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) took the opportunity to address new requirements by setting up a working group. Edward Kendall is the chair of the Equine Canada’s ID and traceability committee and was asked to participate as a member of the CFIA working group.

“It started as a group of six and grew to over 20 people which included representatives from several branches of CFIA, Agriculture Agri-Food Canada (their programs department), Health Canada, the processing sector both in Western and Eastern Canada, provincial associations (horse user groups) and of course national representation,” explains Kendall.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) was brought in late in the process.

While the Canadian Food Inspection Agency was spurred by changes with European regulations, according to Kendall, it established interim measures to set new Canadian standards for processing horse meat.

“The new standard for Canada is that you must have at least a six month health record for any horse that you intend to put forward for processing."

DECLARATION

“As it stands, the owner has to make a declaration, which means the owner has to have a lot of history on his horses. That can be a challenge, and owners will have to be more diligent in recording information,” says Jean Szkotnicki of the Canadian Animal Health Institute (CAHI), a trade association that represents animal health companies. Veterinarians will also have to be more meticulous in their record keeping and descriptives.

“There is a bigger problem, when you look at the horse industry from coast to coast. You have such a range of responsibilities for giving horse health treatments to horses. In some parts of the country, horse health treatments and drugs are almost exclusively given by vets while in other parts of the country they are administered by vets, trainers, staff of trainers or owners,” explains Vel Evans of Strategic Equine, a company who has had extensive experience in conducting national and provincial horse surveys.

“There is so much diversity in who has the responsibility for administering horse health treatments. In a broad sense, it is extremely variable from sector to sector and coast to coast,” says Evans. Add another dimension in that there are medications that are prescribed by a veterinarian but not administered by a veterinarian.

“Canada and the United States are moving towards something called On Farm Safety Programs. These are intended to be long-term programs that monitor the health of animals that may enter the food chain at one point. That would be more of a permanent solution. But of course, in order to get some kind of permanent solution in place, it takes time,” adds Kendall.

DRUGS NOT PERMITTED FOR USE LIST

There is no question that there will continue to be a list of medications not
NEW RULES FOR THE UNWANTED EQUINE

permitted for use in horses designated for meat consumption. What could possibly change might be the particular items on the list.

As it stands, there are some discrepancies that exist between what is currently not permitted for use in Europe and what appears on Canada’s drugs not permitted for use in horses slaughtered for food list.

For example, in the European Union, clenbuterol (Ventipulmin®) a potent bronchodilator can be used and an MRL (minimum residue level) has been established but in Canada it is a drug that may not be permitted for use in horses intended for human consumption.

If we are attempting to meet EU standards, it is possible that some of these drugs may be moved into different categories given time and it’s important to continue monitoring the lists provided by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

As a horse owner, if any of these substances appear on the Equine Identification Document that currently covers six months of health records, then the animal will be ineligible for meat processing. Recognize that in the future, health records covering a longer period of time and possibly the lifetime of the horse may eventually be called for. Perhaps the medications chosen for treatment may need to be evaluated to see if alternatives are available.

“There are MRLs (minimum residue limits) that are established for many classes of drugs but not for every class of drug so they (CFIA) elected to require a six month withdrawal period to capture everything that might possibly be in a horse’s system,” says Kendall.

“In an ideal world, you would have MRLs on all drugs but we haven’t required that level of safety data for equine products not treating them as a slaughter animal in the past,” explains Skotnicki. The ‘essential drug’ list (those requiring a six month withdrawal) is one that was generated from Europe and perhaps we need to have a more thorough look at that list.”

Canadian gFARAD Services already exists to provide expert-mediated decision support for any inquiry related to drug or chemical residues in food animals. Canadian gFARAD personnel also assist veterinarians or government agencies with inquiries and have been recommending guidelines for withdrawal for many animals. It is hoped that organizations like this can help provide assistance to ensure the lists are thorough and complete.

“To the best of my knowledge, equine practitioners are also looking at those lists that have been provided by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We need to know what products we have in the market place that we can actually provide a withdrawal time,” says Szkotnicki.

“The Veterinary Drug Directorate is working on that and looking for sources of information from other countries. There is some data available and maybe some products can be on this positive list that can be administered but according to an actual scientific based withdrawal time rather than a default withdrawal period of six months.

“We have to be focused on the fact that there has been a great deal of background done, the current lists give us something to comment on and we look to finding some science based solutions.”

KNOWLEDGE WITHDRAWAL TIMES

In April 2010, the CFIA expects to have a list of drugs that are safe to be given or fed to equines that may be used for food. Appropriate withdrawal periods will be provided for these products. Literature has suggested that owners consult with their veterinarian if drugs that can be safely given or fed to horses that may be used for food do not appear on the list.

Some veterinarians have expressed concern over being charged with this responsibility citing that they are uncomfortable with the notion of providing clients with withdrawal times particularly with medications or nutraceuticals they are unfamiliar with or have not dispensed.

“There are so many products that can be bought over the counter and used without a veterinarian prescribing them,” surmises Szkotnicki.

There is concern about the long complicated lists that are currently available which owners will have to decipher. With a number of essential drugs requiring a six month withdrawal it is Kendall’s sense that many of these horses will be held in some kind of quarantine station for a number of months prior to being processed.

“We have to be able to understand what alternative drugs can be used, ones that are cost effective and practical,” says Szkotnicki.

“I would like to see if the EU has specified qualifications that only apply to their horses, for instance, if they are going to decide they have a six month withdrawal for products which they recognize have no withdrawal times. I would like to see the option for processors to sell to other markets with avoidance of contamination in the processing line with a second set of regulations that permits withdrawal times for those products that the European Union chooses not to recognize,” says Bell.

According to Szkotnicki, it is hoped that there is willingness with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the VDD to dialogue and accept assistance with industry stakeholders so that scientific solutions can be developed.

“The issue I see right now is the dumping issue from the United States that’s my primary concern. There are 100,000 horses coming from over the border which is more than our entire production.” - Edward Kendall
HORSE WELFARE

When asked about how these changes might affect horse welfare, Kendall didn’t hesitate to respond. “I don’t think that we are moving backwards when it comes to horse welfare, I think we are moving more towards a continuous monitoring situation and from a welfare point of view, it is only going to get better.”

The question is what will happen to horses that end up at livestock auctions after July 31, 2010.

“Many horses will not be sold if they do not have the certificate (EID). The certificate will have to come with them. Of course, I am concerned about this from an animal welfare standpoint,” states Bell. She goes on to explain. “The price of horse meat dropped precipitously with the flood of horses coming in from the United States.

“My concern is the United States has a problem with the unwanted horse. I do not want us to be the dumping ground for U.S. problems thus creating a problem for our country. I feel horrible about what has happened to the plight of the unwanted horse in the United States but we have to be custodians of our own horses,” says Bell.

Evans has had a chance to complete some work that can provide insight as she was involved in completing a provincial survey in the province of Saskatchewan in the fall of 2009. “Anecdotal information suggests that the auction houses have almost closed down because there is insufficient value in horses delivered to make it viable and worth running auctions.

“Feedlots are already established. They have been in existence for certain markets, for example horses that go to Japan or those that go directly to processing,” says Bell. “There are some excellently run feedlots. There will be more feedlots.

“The other thing that I think is going to happen is that a lot of horses that have been long term performance horses or racehorses will simply not be eligible to be processed for meat.”

“This is my personal opinion and my opinion only, is that we will have to find other ways to have these animals disposed.”

EQUINE IDENTIFICATION

The European Union wants to make sure that for the meat to their public, that there is a system in place in Canada to monitor what drugs are given, in addition to spot testing.

“We have to recognize that the single solution to all this is a National Identification program. Probably what we need to do is market very heavily to our horse owners that this will be to our advantage certainly in this instance, in biosecurity, traceability, an advantage in determining what horses do throughout their life, to know what happens to horses after they finish their careers. It is going to be an excellent tracking tool,” says Bell.

“The industry was ready to move forward with traceability systems three years ago and the federal government has put that on hold and placed the industry in a situation where we are forced to respond under very tight timelines,” says Vel Evans.

“Equine Canada spent from 2002 to 2006 developing the CanEQUID specs in consultation with industry, and these were presented back in 2006. It wasn’t that the industry didn’t put forward a plan but government put other species ahead of the horse industry and so the industry was put under the gun to come up with a short-term plan.

“There are some challenges with the current system as it stands. It is presently a paper-based system. Right from the beginning the industry said a paper-based system is the most onerous system to work with. Industry is behind an electronic based system like CanEQUID, if the next step for the CFIA is to move in that direction, then that’s positive.”

Equine Canada will be moving forward in 2010 and conducting a National Traceability Readiness Study to determine the current status of the industry to evaluate the impact of these kinds of regulatory changes on the industry.

A pilot project will also be conducted in Ontario in partnership with the Ontario Racing Commission and OnTrace Agri-food Traceability. That project will take a selected group of horse owners in the province and determine the number of movements of their horses and number of horse health treatments over a 90 day period to try and develop some kind of handle on the cost of the industry for moving ahead with a traceability system.

The ultimate outcome in 2010 is for industry to develop a detailed action plan for how traceability would roll out for Canada. The response from the CFIA to the European Union in late 2009 included a commitment to have some kind of traceability system in place in Canada by 2012/2013.

MOVING FORWARD

We have to recognize that times have changed. Increased restrictions to ensure safe food supply, traceability, biosecurity in the face of disease outbreaks that threaten movement of horses, are needed. We are well on our way to developing and implementing systems that can help achieve these goals.

As horse owners, it is important to understand the implications. While no one likes to think of what happens to their horse(s) years down the road, the decisions we make today can influence what happens to them tomorrow.
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#6) Kentucky Futurity #119  
Foals of 2008 to Race in 2011
PAYMENT DUE FOR EVENTS #6 & 7  
March 15  
a) Supplemental Payment due March 15

$1,000  
$500

#7) Tattersalls Pace 2011  
Foals of 2008 to Race in 2011
OPEN  FILLY
$500  
$300

PAYMENT DUE FOR EVENTS #6 & 7

Those horses not nominated to these events by the yearling payment may be made eligible by making the two-year-old supplemental payment of the fees designated above.

#8) International Stallion Stakes #108  
Foals of 2008 to Race in 2010
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #8  
March 15:  
$300
April 15:  
$400
May 15:  
$500
b) Supplemental Payment due March 15

$1,000

Ineligible two year olds may be supplemented these events in 2010 by making the payment designated above on March 15 plus the April 15 and May 15 payments.

Future Eligibility:

*The March 15 payment guarantees eligibility to the Bluegrass Series #36 as a three year old.

#9) Bluegrass Series #36  
Foals of 2008 to Race in 2010
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #9  
March 15:  
$300
April 15:  
$400
May 15:  
$500
b) Supplemental Payment due March 15

$550

#10) OPEN PACE  
$10,000G Eliminations: Saturday, October 16  
$150,000E Final: Saturday, October 23
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #10 & 11  
March 15:  
$1,500
April 15:  
$2,000
Declaration Fee:  
$2,500

#11) OPEN TROT*  
$10,000G Eliminations: Saturday, October 16  
$150,000E Final: Saturday, October 23
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #11 & 12  
March 15:  
$1,500
April 15:  
$1,500
Declaration Fee:  
$1,500

Elimination winners, in an order determined by lot, may select their post-positions for the final.

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#12) OPEN MARE PACE  
No Eliminations  
$80,000E Event: Saturday, October 23
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #12 & 13  
March 15:  
$1,000
April 15:  
$1,500
Declaration Fee:  
$1,500

#13) OPEN MARE TROT*  
No Eliminations  
$80,000E Event: Saturday, October 23
PAYMENT SCHEDULE EVENT #13 & 14  
March 15:  
$1,000
April 15:  
$1,500
Declaration Fee:  
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