



Another Victory for the Horses!

On Friday September 21, 2007 the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled unanimously to uphold a decision by the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, reaffirming the constitutionality of an Illinois law preventing the slaughter of horses for human consumption. The three judge panel recognized that the will of the people of Illinois and the law should be upheld and struck down the challenge of the slaughter plant, Cavel International, that the law was unconstitutional.

The Illinois state Congress passed a ban on horse slaughter in May of 2007 and when it was signed by the governor it became law immediately. Following that Cavel International, filed suit in federal court to challenge the law's constitutionality. On July 5, the US District Court ruled the law constitutional and enforceable. However, Cavel appealed that decision to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and were able to argue for an injunction to allow them to continue to slaughter horses while the case was considered. "The court made the only decision they could under the circumstances. So, while we are happy with the decision it was not unexpected," said Shelley Sawhook, President of the American Horse Defense Fund (AHDF). "The state of Illinois spoke decisively on the issue and the people of Illinois did not want their state to be the home of the nation's only horse slaughter plant." This does not mean that Cavel has no options and will never again slaughter another horse at their US plant. They can challenge the ruling through appeals by either petitioning for a review by the full panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, or it can appeal directly to the Supreme Court of the United States. However, earlier this year the Supreme Court refused to hear a similar request by the two Texas horse slaughter plants operating in violation of Texas law.

"The AHDF and all other major humane agencies call on Cavel to read the handwriting on the wall and to stop delaying the inevitable by continuing to challenge the decisions of the courts," said Sawhook. "Every day this drag on hundreds of horses are killed needlessly. There are options for owners, as evidenced by our book, Alternatives to Auction and Slaughter, other than slaughter" Illinois is not the only state who has or is considering legislation to ban horse slaughter. Many other states have enacted or are considering laws to protect horses from slaughter. There is also a movement to pass federal legislation to ban horse slaughter in the United States and the transport of horses abroad for slaughter pending in the US Congress. The bills, HR 503 and S 311, are now more important than ever to make sure that horses who would have been sent to Cavel are not exported for slaughter in Canada

or Mexico. “The people of this country are speaking out and saying clearly that they do not wish for their horses to be treated so inhumanely,” says Sawhook. “They believe it is the right thing to do and so do we at the AHDF. It is the humane thing to do and the AHDF is proud to be a leading supporter of the federal law to ban horse slaughter.”

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