



Animal Welfare Institute

P.O. Box 3650 Washington, DC 20027-0150 www.awionline.org
telephone: (703) 836-4300 facsimile: (703) 836-0400

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Richard Reynnells, National Program Leader, Animal Production Systems
US Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research,
Education and Extension Service, Plant and Animal Systems
800 9th Street, SW, Room 3140 Waterfront Centre
Washington, DC 20250-2220

Dear Richard:

I am writing as a follow-up to our phone conversation to reiterate the staunch opposition of the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) to the upcoming meeting, "Unwanted Horse Issue: What Now?" It is disingenuous to claim that this meeting is about helping horses; on the contrary, it is clearly a thinly- veiled charade intended to further the interests of those who support the sale of horses for slaughter.

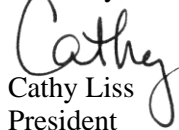
The current attention on the so-called "unwanted horse" is a campaign strategy being employed by pro-slaughter interests in response to the widely supported public campaign to end horse slaughter. The majority of speakers on your program are outspoken opponents of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act.

In a small step toward evening the playing field, I requested that Dr. Patricia Hogan, recipient of the 2005 American Veterinary Medical Association President's Award, be added to the program. While she is opposed to horse slaughter, she is also one of the top equine veterinarians in this country. You invited her to be a speaker at the meeting via a phone message, and Dr. Hogan made plans to take time off from her veterinary practice because of her strong commitment to horse welfare. Soon thereafter, you withdrew the invitation.

When you called to inform me of this development, you stated that Dr. Hogan has the same position as Holly Hazard of HSUS and thus would not have something to add to the program. This was quite presumptuous, unless of course you were referring to the fact that both women oppose horse slaughter. Dr. Hogan's dismissal from the program not only ignores the tremendous wealth of knowledge that she offers on issues of equine welfare, but it contradicts your assertion that this conference is not about horse slaughter.

If the US Department of Agriculture wishes to highlight its support for sending horses to slaughter, then the Department should have the wherewithal to do so in an open and transparent manner. Instead, you have composed a stacked panel with one welfare group, which is being treated as a token, in an attempt to paint this as a "balanced" event. Perhaps the program will prove me wrong by actually proposing sound, humane solutions to horse welfare issues, rather than finding that horse slaughter is a "tragic yet necessary evil" – but I doubt it.

Sincerely,


Cathy Liss
President