

2. Comparison of documented feedlot conditions with European laws and regulations

Do the observed conditions comply with European and Swiss standards? Opposite to claims of Swiss importers and distributors, the answer is “absolutely not”.

Examples:

2.1. Veterinary Care

- EU Guidelines 98/58 on the Protection of Agricultural Farm Animals

Appendix No. 4) If an animal shows signs of injury or illness, it must be given proper care immediately; if an animal does not respond to these measures, a veterinarian must be consulted as soon as possible. If necessary, the sick or injured animals must be housed separately in appropriate facilities and must be provided with dry and comfortable bedding, where appropriate.

- Swiss Animal Protection Regulation 455.1

Article 5.2 Care should be designed to prevent illness and injury. The caretaker is responsible for ensuring that sick or injured animals are immediately housed, attended, treated or killed depending on their condition. The necessary equipment must be available within a reasonable time in case of an emergency. The animals must be securely restrained for veterinary or other treatments.

Observations:

- Canada: It took the intervention of our investigators and the involvement of local law enforcement to secure treatment of the distressed animals that were found. Quality of the treatment provided is unknown.

- USA: It took the intervention of our investigators and the involvement of local law enforcement to secure euthanasia of the dying horses at the Dennis Chavez feedlot. However, according to our observations, there was no help for countless sick and injured horses found at the different export pens. The Mexican veterinarian that frequents the pens to inspect the horses prior to transport, does not provide treatment. Photographs obtained by Animals' Angels show horses dying in the pens without assistance.

- Mexico & Argentina: No veterinary care observed

2.2. Care

- Swiss Animal Protection Regulation 455.1

Article 5.4 Hooves, claws and nails must be regularly and professionally maintained and trimmed as necessary.

Article 60.2 Hooves must be maintained so that horses are kept in good condition, movement is not impeded and the occurrence of hoof diseases is prevented.

Technical Information from the BVET¹: Care should prevent illness and injury (see Art. 5 Para. 2 TSchV). Even unshod horses, foals and older horses, need regular, professional hoof care to prevent misalignments, movement impairments and hoof diseases (see Art. 5 Para. 4; Art. 60 Para. 2 TSchV).

Observations:

Investigators documented horses with badly neglected hooves in all feedlots. In Canada, it was noted that many horses were lying down constantly. It could not be determined whether they were resting or down because standing caused them pain.

2.3. Personnel

- EU Guidelines 98/58 on the Protection of Agricultural Farm Animals

Appendix No. 1) For animal care, sufficient staff must be available that has the required ability, knowledge and professional skills.

Observations:

- Canada: All the feedlots appeared to be operated by very few workers and their activity seemed to be limited to keeping the feed troughs filled. It is questionable if these workers would be able to detect all sick and injured horses among the thousand or more horses in the feedlot.

2.4. Protection from Weather

- EU Guidelines 98/58 on the Protection of Agricultural Farm Animals

Appendix No. 12) Animals that are not housed in buildings must be protected from adverse weather conditions, predators and health risks as far as is necessary and possible.

- Swiss Animal Protection Regulation 455.1

Article 6 The caretaker must provide the necessary shelter for animals that cannot adapt to the weather.

Article 36.1 Domestic animals may not be exposed to extreme weather conditions for long periods of time. If the animals are not housed indoors under such conditions, an appropriate natural or artificial shelter that can house all the animals at once and provides shelter from water, wind and strong sun must be available. There must be a sufficient dry resting area.

- Swiss Farm and Domestic Animal Regulation 455.110.1

Article 6.1 There must be enough space for all the animals at once in a weather shelter.

Observations:

¹ Technical Information on Animal Protection: Horses kept outdoors, Nr. 11.8_(1)_d, April 2011, Federal Office for Veterinary Practices BVET (see appendix: Legal Basis)

The vast majority of the feedlots, export pens and slaughter plant holding pens did not have shelter. On the rare occasions when shelter was available (Canada: Bouvry pasture for mares & foals; Argentina: Tree in slaughter horse pen) it was too small and did not provide shelter for all horses confined in that pasture/pen.

2.5. Food

- EU Guidelines 98/58 on the Protection of Agricultural Farm Animals

Appendix No. 14) The animals must receive a healthy, age-appropriate and species-appropriate diet that is available in a quantity sufficient to keep them healthy and meet their nutritional needs.

- Swiss Animal Protection Regulation 455.1

Article 60.1 Horses must have sufficient roughage such as hay available for their typical activity level, except during grazing.

- Swiss Farm and Domestic Animal Regulation 455.110.1

6.4 Food that is provided in addition to grazing must meet the conventional quality and hygiene requirements. The appropriate feeding equipment must be put in place if necessary to fulfill these requirements.

Technical Information from the BVET: The species-appropriate food for horses is based on fiber-rich grass and herbage. If the pasture does not offer enough food, for example in winter, additional, appropriate food, primarily hay, sufficient for the activity level of the horses, must be fed (see Art. 4 Para. 2; Art. 36 Para. 3; Art. 60 Para. 1 TSchV). This must meet the conventional quality and hygiene requirements, for which reason, in general, the appropriate feeding equipment, such as covered hay racks, must be in place (see Art. 6 Para. 4 Farm and Domestic Animals V).

Observations:

- Canada: Only the mares and foals grazing in the pasture were fed appropriately. The feedlot horses had access to grain all day and the feed troughs were always full. Hay or straw was only visible in isolated pens, although this should be the main component of a healthy diet. Many horses were overweight. The feed troughs were not appropriate for outdoor use because they had no cover. When it snowed, the food was completely covered with snow.

- USA: Horses at the Dennis Chavez feedlot did not have access to anything but corn husks, which is not appropriate food for horses. Horses at the Presidio export pens had only very limited amounts of hay available, some pens had nothing. Horses inside the Eagle Pass export pens had access to hay. However, hay was not spread out in the pen, causing the dominant horses to guard the hay and restrict access for the weaker horses.

- Mexico: Limited or no access to food was observed

- Argentina: No food was visible at the Lamar slaughter plant holding pens. At the slaughter buyer collecting station, horses were fed straw.

2.6. Flooring

- Swiss Animal Protection Regulation 455.1

Article 7.3 Flooring must be designed so that the health of the animals is not compromised.

Article 34.1 Paved floors must be non-slip and sufficiently clean. Floors in resting areas must be sufficiently dry and meet the temperature needs of the animals.

- Swiss Farm and Domestic Animal Regulation 455.110.1

Article 6.3 The ground in areas where animals are primarily kept must not be muddy and not significantly contaminated with feces or urine.

Technical Information from the BVET: Because ground that is overly contaminated with feces and urine, especially in combination with mud, can cause painful infections in the hoof and foot area, the ground may not be significantly contaminated with feces or urine.

Observations:

Canada: In the feedlots, the horses often stand on ground that is covered in manure. When it rains, it also becomes very muddy. Since there is no shelter, there are no dry resting areas.

Mexico & Argentina: Slaughter plant pen flooring observed was extremely slippery, causing the horses to fall.



INVESTIGATIONS & ADVOCACY

(443) 821-3343
animalsangels.org