The Secret Empire of Kill Buyer Mike McBarron – An Animals’ Angels Investigation

Dates:
January 2014 to March 2016

Locations:
Mike McBarron Feedlot, Forney, TX; Eagle Pass Export Pens, TX; Presidio Export Pens, TX
Stanley Brother Feedlot, Bastrop, LA

Background Information:

Mike McBarron is a long-term slaughter horse buyer and horse trader based out of Forney, TX. Having been active as a kill buyer for decades, McBarron has a lengthy history of violating the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulations.

McBarron originally was conducting business in partnership with Trent Wayne Ward as T&M Horse Company. Afterwards, he started to collaborate with Mitch Stanley from Hamburg, AR and subsequently formed M & M Livestock.

Mike McBarron is also one of the largest kill buyers in the country and has a whole network of horse traders in multiple states working for him, who ensure that McBarron is able to provide thousands of horses to the Mexican slaughter plants each month. Additionally, McBarron has teamed up with a broker program, which also sells hundreds of his horses each month to increase his profits.

Since April of 2015, Mike McBarron also operates his own trucking company, M & M Farms (DOT 2597695).

Animals’ Angels has spent the last 2 years documenting his empire and learning more about his business activities. Our information was obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests, informants, and on-site investigations.

The results show that Mike McBarron runs a multi-million dollar operation while violating animal protection laws and regulations as well as environmental laws on a regular basis.
A) Information obtained via FOIA request/Informants

Violation of the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulations 9CFR Sec 88

- IL07071: Horse dead on arrival, one horse injured
- IL07186: Injured equine moved in interstate commerce for slaughter, stallion commingled with other horses, owner shipper certificates incomplete, not all horses identified by USDA back tags.
- TX03234: Horses shipped without health certificates
- TX03304: Horse cannot bear weight on all four legs as required. Former APHIS employee Joey Astling testified that the horse was not able to bear weight on all four limbs and that the way it walked was to hop on three legs. Astling observed the horse at the Dallas Crown slaughter plant and his testimony described the horse as emaciated, his ankle appeared to be fused and had two holes oozing pus.
- TX04168: Failure to fill out required owner/shipper paperwork (Form 1013)

After multiple violations, McBarron received a fine of $21,000 USD.

Violation of Texas Environmental Laws

- 2014 Texas Department of Environmental Quality Investigation 1210540: Mike McBarron violated 30 TAC Chapter 335-6 by burial of horse carcasses without notifying TCEQ. McBarron was issued a warning letter, but received no fine.
- 2014 Complaint # 205717: Mike McBarron violated 30 TAC 321.47(b)(3) and 2D TWC 26.121 (a) (1) by failing to prevent unauthorized discharge of agricultural waste and into adjacent waters of the state. Again, no fine was issued.
- 2015: Complaint # 213639 on 4/30/15 reported a strong odor was coming from the premises. The investigation was closed and no NOV/NOE (Notice of violation) has been issued.

On 3/8/2016 Animals’ Angels investigators visited the premises in the middle of a thunderstorm and noticed that the entire pen area was flooded and that there was a large amount of water contaminated with animal waste running off the feedlot into the adjacent pond.
and drainage ditch. The drainage ditch runs directly through multiple yards of the adjacent housing development.

![Waste water running off feedlot](image)

**Research:**

Public documents & shipping records indicate that in 2014 Mike McBarron shipped between **933 and 5284 horses, mules and donkeys/month** to Mexico for slaughter through the Eagle Pass export pen alone. There are no 2014 numbers available for Presidio; however, taking 2013 Sagarpa records into consideration, it is fair to assume that he shipped at least between 1500-2000 more animals/month through that export pen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Horses exported</th>
<th>Rejects</th>
<th>Reason Rejection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>3660</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>Ticks, Cuts, Abscess, No Microchip, Nasal Discharge, Limping, Blind, Paperwork Error, Horseshoes, Weak, Document Error, Chip Error, Parasites, Dead on Arrival, Laceration</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2014</td>
<td>1271</td>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>1480</td>
<td>335</td>
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<td>April 2014</td>
<td>933</td>
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<td>May 2014</td>
<td>2644</td>
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<td>June 2014</td>
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<td>July 2014</td>
<td>4026</td>
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<td>August 2014</td>
<td>3518</td>
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<td>September 2014</td>
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<td>October 2014</td>
<td>3985</td>
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<td>November 2014</td>
<td>3160</td>
<td>164</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>5284</td>
<td>465</td>
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After the EU ban of Mexican horsemeat imports, McBarron’s exports declined drastically.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Horses exported</th>
<th>Rejects</th>
<th>Reason Rejection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2015</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>170</td>
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<td>March 2015</td>
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<td>May 2015</td>
<td>2039</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2015</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Prior to the European ban of horsemeat from Mexico, McBarron delivered to the EU approved plants Promotora Ganadero del Rio and Carnicos de Jerez. Since the ban, there likely wasn’t enough demand from the EU approved plants anymore, and he since switched parts of his business to municipal plants such as Amador Jaurgui Reynoso and Ingro del Norte.

The amount of money involved in this business is clearly indicated on an invoice of the Carnicos de Jerez plant, summarizing payments to him for horse deliveries between January and March of 2014.

(Image only shows payments in January 2014)
Total Payments to McBarron: $1,988,683.02
The export documents also show that between 164 and 465 of McBarron's horses each month are rejected by the Mexican veterinarian and therefore cannot be exported to Mexico. Rejected horses are returned with the shipper and exposed to an uncertain fate. Many of them are shipped to the border multiple times, until they are finally accepted. Others simply die in the pen area or are sold via the kill buyer's broker program.

Animals’ Angels research also shows that Mike McBarron works with the following kill buyers & horse traders to obtain the required horses for his slaughter horse business:

- Joe Simon, Perkins, OK
- Trent Ward, Kaufman, TX
- Stanley Brothers, Bastrop, LA
- Jason Fabrizius, Eaton, CO
- Randy Ray, Murray, KY
- Blake Wilf, Romance, AR
- Terry Brooke, Jonesburg, MO
- Jim Wine, Chico, TX
- Jody Ringelstein, San Antonio, TX
- Rick Thomas, TX
- Terry Saulters, Waco, TX
- Clint Smith, Wister, OK
- David Harville, Bivins, TX
- Joe Western, TX
- John Birdsong, Carrollton, GA

According to paperwork received, these kill buyers buy horses for McBarron at auctions all across the United States. Once the requisite number of horses for a load is obtained, they email
McBarron all the information about the horses in the shipment that is required for the USDA owner/shipper paperwork such as color, breed, sex, age USDA slaughter tag and microchip number as well as a copy of the auction invoice.

McBarron then uses this information to fill out Form 10-13 and the International Health Certificate, which is needed to export horses to Mexico for slaughter. **On all these forms, McBarron lists himself as the owner/shipper and reports that the horses were loaded and inspected in Forney, TX – even if these horses shipped straight to the export pens from the affiliated kill buyer's lot.**

**Example: Fabrizius Livestock, Eaton, CO**

- Horses purchased by Fabrizius at Centennial Livestock Auction, Fort Collins, CO
- Health Certificate # T-1488761
- 33 Horses transported by Fabrizius exported via Eagle Pass Export Pen, TX
- **Owner/Shipper according to paperwork: Mike McBarron**
- Veterinarian according to paperwork: Dr. T. Holt, Terrell, TX
- Plant: Carnicos de Jerez
- Invoice #2782: $16,284.00

*Centennial Auction Receipt for Horses bought by Jason Fabrizius*
Upon arrival at the export pen, the trailer could not be unloaded for 5 hours due to an issue with a horse inside the trailer. Sara Venegas Gurrola from the Carnicos de Jerez plant was notified about the delay and was informed that the horses “came all the way from Colorado”.

Example: Blake Wilf, Romance, AR

Information sent to McBarron by Blake Wilf about horses in shipment
- Horses purchased at Blake Wilf's sale in Romance, AR
- Health Certificate # T14-88755
- 37 horses exported via Eagle Pass Export Pen, TX
- Owner/Shipper according to paperwork: Mike McBarron
- Veterinarian according to paperwork: Dr. T. Holt, Terrell, TX
- Plant: Carnicos de Jerez
- Invoice # 2776: $16,428.00
- Rejects: 3 (cut above eye, snuts, ticks)

Owner Shipper Paperwork for same horses listing McBarron as shipper

Example: Stanley Brothers, Hamburg, AR
USDA Slaughter Tag & Microchip # sent to McBarron by the Stanley Brothers

- Horses purchased at the Addison Auction, Lippan, TX
- 37 Horses exported via Presidio Export Pen, TX
- Owner/Shipper according to paperwork: Mike McBarron
- Veterinarian according to paperwork: Dr. T. Holt
- Plant: Carnicos de Jerez
- Invoice# 222: $16,516.00
- Payment only for 36 horses – one either dead or rejected

The Stanley Brothers are Mike McBarron’s most frequently used shippers and they also receive the most money: In March of 2014 alone, payments of $300,000.00 were sent to their account.

The Stanley Brothers have been shipping horses to slaughter for a very long time. Mitchell B. Stanley has multiple previous violations of the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulations (9 C.F.R. Sec 88 et seq.) and was fined a total of $34,925.00 by USDA.

The violations include transporting a horse for slaughter that was blind in both eyes, shipping a horse unable to bear weight on all four legs, shipping reactor horses and shipping multiple horses without USDA slaughter tag or Form 10-13.
The Stanley Brothers operate several collecting stations in Louisiana and Mississippi. Their Mississippi Collecting station operated by Jerry Earls made the news in December of 2014, when concerned observers reported multiple dead, dying or severely emaciated horses in the lot.


After the news broke, the Stanley Brothers quickly shipped the bulk of the horses to Mike McBarron for export to slaughter. While some of them were rescued before they were shipped, the true fate of all the horses remains unknown. The Stanley Brothers were never held responsible for the dead and dying horses in the Mississippi lot.
When Animals’ Angels visited their Bastrop Collecting Station, they found muddy pens with no shelter and a group of approx. 30 slaughter horses. One of them was severely emaciated and had an extremely enlarged left front knee. The horse appeared unable to bear weight on the leg.

While reporting the situation to law enforcement, Animals’ Angels found out that there had been multiple other cruelty complaints about the collecting station, but no charges were ever filed.

To this day, the Stanley Brothers treatment of the slaughter horses in their care has not improved and yet they continue to buy, store and transport thousands of slaughter horses for M & M Livestock every month. The Stanley Brothers have also started a broker program to sell additional horses and rejects from their feedlot.
Example: Terry Saulters, Waco, TX

- Horses purchased at Bobby Edmond Horse Sale, Clyde, TX
- 34 Horses exported via the Eagle Pass Export Pen, TX
- Health certificate #: T-14 88694
- Owner/Shipper according to paperwork: Mike McBarron
- Veterinarian according to paperwork: Dr. T. Holt, Terrell, TX
- Plant: Carnicos de Jerez
- Invoice # 2766: $13,974
- Payment only for 29 horses, 5 horses were rejected

McBarron is the only person in contact with the slaughter plant. He bills the plant for the delivery, and once payment is received, he pays the kill buyer who carried out the shipment. Prior to shipment, he notifies the export pen manager of the arrival of the shipment and who the shipper will be.

Information obtained from an anonymous source reveals that the relationship between Mike McBarron and the former Texas Department of AG export pen manager Ricardo Perez was quite inappropriate. Not only was Perez “in the know” regarding the real shippers of the horses that his pen received, he also assisted McBarron by correcting paperwork and microchip issues.

On 3/20/14, McBarron informed Perez that donkeys # 2807 and 2880 (Health Certificate # T14-88670) were shipped with the same microchip number and stated: “You might want to fix this.” (Evidence available upon request)
According to the invoices, McBarron receives between 0.35 – 0.63 cents/lbs for the horses, depending on weight and quality. For donkeys, he receives $28 cents/lbs and for burros he is paid 0.35 cents/lbs.

Since McBarron is the owner/shipper listed on the paperwork, he also is responsible for any issues with the shipments.

On March 13, 2014, McBarron was notified by the Carnicos de Jerez plant that in three of his horses (Shipment with health certificate #T14-84364 & T 14-84345 & T14-88660) high levels of Cadmium residue were detected. Cadmium is a banned substance in the EU as well as in Russia. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified cadmium and cadmium compounds as carcinogenic to humans.
While the plant sent out the depicted official “Warning letter”, the plant administrator Sara Gurrola informed McBarron she would need a response letter from him regarding the incident, stating that the horses had been fed with “nothing but grass.” McBarron promised to do so. (Evidence available upon request)

On March 12, 2014, McBarron was reprimanded by the Carnicos de Jerez plant for shipping horses that were too weak/fragile and had been loaded into the trailer with 39 much larger horses. The three horses were dead upon arrival.

On April 11, 2014, Jose Cantu complained again, this time about McBarron shipping a load with very bad and very skinny horses via the Eagle Pass export pens. He advised McBarron to “try to erase that image”.

According to the International Health Certificate, all horses (no matter where the shipment originated) were inspected by Dr. Timothy Holt from Terrell, TX prior to shipment. A review of the Texas Veterinary Board Records showed that Holt has been reprimanded for several incidents of malpractice/negligence.

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<td>795</td>
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<td>10/15/2000</td>
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<td>Holt, Timothy Ray</td>
<td>2611-49</td>
<td>13, Accreditation Action</td>
<td>3/26/2011</td>
<td>3/26/2011</td>
<td>Formal Reprimand; $1,000 Administrative Penalty; 3 additional hours in continuing education in recordkeeping</td>
<td></td>
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How is it possible for Dr. Holt to inspect all these thousands of horses coming from Colorado, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana?
B) **Additional Investigation**

In addition to extensive research, Animals’ Angels investigators visited Mike McBarron’s collecting station in Forney multiple times and followed trucks loading and unloading at his facility.

Conditions inside the vast pen area are poor at best. There is no shelter available for the majority of the horses, no protection from the sun. In the hot summer months, the dry lot pens turn into a massive dustbowl, while during heavy rain the horses fight their way through mud all the way up to their knees. In April of 2015, the mud was so bad that several horses were stuck and could not get out.

*photo used with permission of anonymous source*

Water/Feed troughs were sometimes found completely empty or tipped over.
Several horses found were completely emaciated or appeared sick. Many were coughing and showed signs of an ongoing strangles infection. Others had fresh injuries, cuts on legs or above eyes. Some were found dead in the pen area and had died without assistance.
In what appeared to be the reject pen, an emaciated grey horse with a completely busted up face was found. Both eyes were swollen shut and dried blood was all over his face.

Severe face injuries

Dead donkey in pen area
On October 18th, 2015, Mike McBarron was observed using an electric prod to move horses, mules and donkeys closer to the loading ramp. All animals were already tagged for slaughter, which makes it a clear violation of the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulation:

9 CFR Part 88 – Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulations

(c) Handling of all equines for slaughter shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause unnecessary discomfort, stress, physical harm, or trauma. **Electric prods may not be used on equines for slaughter for any purpose, including loading or offloading on the conveyance, except when human safety is threatened.**
Investigators also noted that there were an unusually high number of mares with foals inside the lot. According to the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulation, horses have to be at least six month of age before they can legally be shipped to slaughter. A review of thousands of McBarron’s 10-13 Forms did not show the shipment of a single horse under the age of six months.

However, even if foals were being shipped without being listed on the form, they would be rejected by the Mexican veterinarian during the export inspection at the border. It is therefore very likely that these mares and foals are purchased strictly for resale via the broker program. On most dates of observation, there was constant activity at the feedlot. Trucks with long stock trailers were dropping off rejects and private individuals were picking up horses that had been sold via the broker program. At night, the large transport trucks arrived to load the slaughter horses for Mexico.

**Areas of Concern:**

1) Animals’ Angels research & investigations showed several potential violations of the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Regulation:

**§ 88.4 Requirements for transport.**
(a) Prior to the commercial transportation of equines to a slaughtering facility, the owner/shipper must:
(3) Complete and sign an owner-shipper certificate for each equine being transported. The owner-shipper certificate for each equine must accompany the equine throughout transit to the slaughtering facility and must include the following information, which must be typed or legibly completed in ink:
(i) The owner/shipper’s name, address, and telephone number;
(iv) A description of the conveyance, including the license plate number;
…..
(ix) The date, time, and place the equine was loaded on the conveyance;
- All paperwork is in Mike McBarron's name and his facility in Forney, TX is listed as the place of loading. However, the evidence shows that many different shippers transport the horses to the export pens, from locations all across the Southern US. There is no transparency in this system and no accountability for the “real” shipper.

- How can McBarron sign Form 10-13, declaring that all horses are able to bear weight on all four limbs, able to walk unassisted, not blind in both eyes, older than 6 months of age, and not likely to give birth during the trip when he has never laid eyes on these animals?

The Regulation was created to ensure at least minimum welfare standards for slaughter horses; however, it appears that McBarron and his network of kill buyers even deny them this little bit of protection.

2) The information on the International Health Certificate and Residue Affidavit is potentially incorrect

- How can veterinarian Dr. Holt examine horses that have never been anywhere near Terrell, TX and how can he attest that he did not find clinical signs of contagious or infectious diseases?

- How can McBarron guarantee that the horses in the shipment have not been treated with banned substances within the last one hundred eighty (180) days prior to shipment when someone else just purchased the horses a few days before at an auction? It is impossible to trace all these horses back to their original owners and find out which drugs the horse has been given during the last 180 days. There is no guarantee that the meat is free of residues, which creates a severe health risk for the consumer.

3) Severe Welfare Concerns exist

- The investigation showed poor conditions and poor treatment of horses at the Forney collecting station. Injured or sick horses are left to suffer and die without veterinary care and sufficient access to food and water is questionable.

Conclusion:
Animals’ Angels urges the USDA Slaughter Horse Transport Program as well as local authorities such as the Texas Department of Environmental Quality, the Texas Animal Health Commission, and the Texas Attorney General's Office to launch an investigation into Mike McBarron's operations. Our investigation has shown that not only the horses, but also the public health are at risk.

Animals’ Angels has copies of all documents/correspondence mentioned in this report.