

## Investigation at the Slaughter Horse Feedlot in Shelby, MT

### 1. General Information

**Location:**

The Bar S feedlot is located off Highway 2, east of Shelby, MT. The feedlot is not visible from the road, because railway tracks block the view.

**Owner:**

The “BAR S” feedlot is operated by Bouvry Exports Calgary, owned by Claude Bouvry. The company also owns several feedlots and two horse slaughter plants in Canada.

**Feedlot Manager:**

Don Donahue

**Veterinarian:**

Maria's Vet Clinic  
Dr. Hardee Clark DVM  
434-5176

**Feedlot:**

The large feedlot is located in a vast, open area. It is fenced in and the gates are closed between 4.30pm and 7am. There is a small, wooden office building and next to the building are the loading ramps.



### 2. Observations

We arrived at the feedlot at 9am. The gates were open and there were several cars parked in front of the office building. The horses were divided into several large pens. The holding pen in the front contained mothers with their foals. Some foals were only a few days old.



Inside the pen area are two long rows of feed troughs, so that all the horses can be fed at the same time. Every pen has water troughs as well. However, there is **no shelter** for any of the horses. There is no water spraying system to keep the dust down in dry weather.

MT ST 45-8-211. Cruelty to animals

(1) A person commits the offense of cruelty to animals if, without justification, the person knowingly or negligently subjects an animal to mistreatment or neglect by:

(c) failing to provide an animal in the person's custody with:

(ii) minimum protection for the animal from adverse weather conditions, with consideration given to the species;

The horses are not sorted by gender; **stallions are put in the pens together with mares and geldings, which results in frequent fights. In addition, we saw several very pregnant mares mixed in with the others.**

Many of the horses are very young and in good condition. They are very trusting to humans, when we approached the fence several came right to us and started nibbling on our jackets.



We observed that many of them were branded with "S" on the shoulder. Some brands appeared to be fresh.

**Information obtained in regards to the "S" brand:**

We were informed by the Montana Department of Livestock that the Bouvry feedlot is considered a quarantine lot. All animals inside the lot are bound for slaughter and therefore the state does not require them to be tested for EIA (Equine Infectious Anemia), a contagious and incurable disease. In return, all horses have to be

branded with a “S” brand within 48 hours of their arrival at the lot – indicating that their EIA status is unknown. However, during our visit we found several horses without this brand.

**32.3.1405 DISPOSITION OF REACTOR HORSES**

- (1) Equids found to be infected with EIA shall be quarantined to the premise...
- (2) The EIA reactor shall remain under quarantine until it is:
  - (a) consigned to slaughter at a USDA approved equine slaughter establishment;
  - (b) euthanized (or dies) and is buried or incinerated; or
- (3) Movement of any reactor must be accompanied by a USDA, APHIS VS form 1-27.
- (4) The quarantine premise or area for EIA reactors shall provide no less than 200 yards separation from all other equids. The quarantine area and quarantined animals therein may be monitored periodically by a representative of the department of livestock to ensure that provisions of the quarantine are being met. Any EIA reactor not held in quarantine may be ordered euthanized or sent to slaughter.
- (5) All equids found to be infected with EIA shall be identified with a brand on the left neck or left shoulder which will be followed by a number issued by the state veterinarian's office. Identification as an EIA reactor shall be accomplished within 15 days of notification that the animal is infected with EIA. The 81A brand shall be at least 2 inches high and may be either a hot iron brand or a freeze brand. The 81A brand will be assigned in sequence from the state veterinarian's office.

Behind the large pen area is nothing but open farm land and hills. Here, the feedlot maintains its dead pit. Inside the pit were countless horse corpses. The smell was overwhelming. **The decaying bodies were not covered with soil, sawdust or straw – providing easy access for scavengers.** As a result, the hills around the feedlot were covered with horse bones and decaying body parts of horses.



**Mont. Admin. R. 32.3.125 DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES**

(1) Carcasses of animals that have died from other causes than anthrax must be disposed of in a satisfactory manner so as not to become a public nuisance or a menace to livestock or poultry. Carcasses of dead animals may not be disposed of along public highways, streams, lakes, or rivers, or allowed to remain on the ground surface so as to become a public nuisance or a menace to livestock or poultry.

**MC 75-10-213. Unlawful disposition of dead animals** It is unlawful to:

- (1) place all or any part of a dead animal in any lake, river, creek, pond, reservoir, road, street, alley, lot, or field;
- (2) place all or any part of a dead animal within 1 mile of the residence of any person unless the dead animal or part of a dead animal is burned or **buried at least 2 feet underground**



**5/7/08**

**7.12am:**

The feedlot manager arrives and opens the gate to the premises.

**Information received from feedlot manager Don Donahue:**

- No horses or foals will be sold to rescue organizations or private persons. The lot is a quarantine lot, which means every animal inside the lot will be shipped to slaughter.
- The foals remain in the lot until they are old enough (six months) to be legally slaughtered.
- There are 1600 horses inside the lot.

We observed that the green USDA slaughter tags had been attached to the horses in the pen close to the loading ramp.

**9.50am:**

A red truck with a single deck trailer pulled into the feedlot and backed up to the loading ramp.

**Trucking Company:**

1238387 Alberta LTD  
Milk River, Alberta  
DOT: 1618115

**10.20am:**

The driver and someone else from the feedlot start loading the horses. Both used moving paddles and the handling of the horses was calm and without any unnecessary hitting. Dividers were placed.

**10.40am:**

The truck left the premises and started driving towards I-15 north. At 11.20am, he arrived at the Sweetgrass border crossing. The driver entered the USDA inspection station and presented the owner/shipper papers to the USDA official. Then he crossed into Canada, parked and informed the CFIA veterinarian that he "has a load of horses" that needed to be inspected. Together, they walked out to the truck and the veterinarian briefly checked if all the horses are standing and sealed the trailer. At 12.30pm, the truck continued to the plant in Fort Macleod, Alberta. We turned around and continued observing the feedlot.

**5/12/08**

10.20am: A truck with a double deck trailer loaded with horses arrived at the feedlot. He immediately backed up to the ramp and started unloading the horses.

**Trucking Company:**

D+J Trucking  
729 Vaughn Frontage Road  
Great Falls, MT  
DOT: 053541



Double deck trailer unloading



inside view

A visit to D+J Trucking in Great Falls revealed that the company also owns a livestock facility with large pen area. During our visit, the pens were empty, but the ground was covered with horse manure.

5/13

We returned to the feedlot at 5am. Walking along the hills and the railway tracks made it possible to take a closer look at the horses inside the lot. There were several animals that needed medical care.



45-8-211. Cruelty to animals

(1) A person commits the offense of cruelty to animals if, without justification, the person knowingly or negligently subjects an animal to mistreatment or neglect by:

(c) failing to provide an animal in the person's custody with:

(iii) in cases of immediate, obvious, serious illness or injury, licensed veterinary or other appropriate medical care;



During the week long investigation, we never saw more than 3 people working at the feedlot. We never saw anybody checking the pens for injured or sick animals either, the only activity observed was feeding and watering. It is obvious that this is not enough to guarantee appropriate care for 1600 horses, especially not for the many pregnant mares.

**9.30am:**

A single deck truck with Alberta plate entered the feedlot.

**Trucking company:** Vanee Livestock LTD  
Fort Macleod, Alberta  
DOT 014138

In addition to 22 moving violations, the company's drivers also violated the Federal Motor Carrier Regulations 19 times (all violations occurred inside the United States):

Driver OOS Violation Summary (within 30 months)			
<u>Violation Number</u>	Description	<u>Number of OOS Violations</u>	Number of Inspections
383.51(A)	Driving a CMV (CDL) while disqualified	1	<u>1</u>
395.3(A)(1)	11 hour rule violation (Property)	8	<u>8</u>
395.3(A)(2)	14 hour rule violation (Property)	4	<u>4</u>
395.3(B)	60/70 hour rule violation (Property)	1	<u>1</u>
395.8(E)	False report of drivers record of duty status	5	<u>5</u>

Most of the violations are in regards to excessive driving time, which is a serious concern. Overtired truck drivers are a danger to the public on the busy US roadways.



*Horses on loading ramp*



*Horses inside the trailer on their way to the slaughter plant*

The horses were loaded with plastic paddles and sticks. The handling was satisfactory and 30 minutes later the truck left the feedlot and started driving towards I-15 north. Again, we observed the driver stopping at the USDA office and handing in the paperwork. All 26 horses had the green USDA tag attached and were heading to the plant in Fort Mcleod, Alberta.

## **Conclusion:**

- *The conditions at the feedlot are poor. There is no shelter and not enough personnel to check 1600 horses for sickness or injuries. As our documentations shows there are several horses in need of medical care inside the pen area.*
- *Stallions are not separated from mares and geldings which results in frequent fights. Pregnant mares are kept in between the other horses.*
- *The horses in the dead pile are not covered with soil or straw and scavengers carry horse parts to the surrounding areas. This is a public health risk and an environmental concern.*
- *The feedlot does not follow the branding requirements for EIA positive horses.*