Animals’ Angels Investigation of Horse Slaughter Collecting Stations and Auctions in Oklahoma

Introduction:
The investigation was triggered by recent events within the state of Oklahoma. In March of 2013, a 50-year-old horse slaughter ban was lifted when Governor Mary Fallin signed HB1999 into law. The new law will allow horse slaughter plants to process & export horse meat. Additionally, public documents showed a significant increase of horses being shipped to slaughter in Mexico from Oklahoma. The goal of the investigation was to identify kill buyers, slaughter auctions and transport companies and to document the conditions for the horses in their care.

Investigations:

1. Joe Simon Ranch & Perkins Livestock Auction
   Date: 6/30/13

   Location:
   Perkins Livestock Auction & neighbouring property
   2405 W 116th Street
   Perkins, OK

   Background Information:
   Joe Simo, d/b/a Double JJ Horse Company, is a large scale kill buyer who has been in the horse slaughter business for a very long time. After the closing of the Texas horse slaughter plants, Simon started shipping horses to Mexico for slaughter. He is a steady supplier to the Intermeats plant in Aguascalientes, cashing in 0.48 cents a pound for the horses he delivers. Public records indicate that Double JJ generally ships around 150 horses per month and collects over $60,000. Simon also has a long history of transport to slaughter violations, most notably shipping severely injured and blind horses to the plants. USDA Case # TX-04228 indicates that this case includes 70 different violations, 12 of which involved horses dying during transport, and/or obtaining the most horrific injuries imaginable.
Although Thomas Bolick (USDA Office of General Counsel) requested a total fine of $84,625 for all associated violations, the ultimate civil penalty imposed by the court on August 15, 2009 was only $36,500.

Only a few years later, Joe Simon found his way into the courthouse defending himself, yet again, against 6 similar violations. On July 15, 2011, a settlement was negotiated and a civil penalty of $24,000 was assessed, to be paid in 48 convenient instalments of $500.00. Additionally, the settlement included every non-adjudicated violation of the regulation committed by Joe Simon up to the effective date of the order.

Observations:
Investigators visited Joe Simon’s feedlot in Oklahoma. “J S Ranch” is located next to the Perkins Livestock Auction. A long, gated driveway leads up to the ranch, which is surrounded by extensive pastures. Several horses were visible, however, they were too far away to assess their condition.

According to insider information, Simon also uses the pen area of the Perkins Livestock Auction to hold some of his horses. The auction is right next door to his premises and features a large, modern auction building as well as a small restaurant and extensive pen area. Investigators noted a group of horses in one of the pens, gathered around a bale of hay. All of them were in average condition and no injuries were seen. There was no activity, therefore investigators left the premises.

2. Mid America Stockyards

Date: 
7/1/13-7/2/13

Location: 
36970 W Highway 16
Bristow, OK 74010

Sale Schedule: 
Cattle Auction: Every Saturday
Horse Auction: Every other Monday 6pm

Owner/Manager: 
Jerry & Helen Marie Varner
www.midamericastockyards.com

Background Information:
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Mid America Stockyards, owned by the Varner family has been in business for over 40 years. It is one of Oklahoma’s larger auctions and holds a weekly cattle sale every Saturday as well as a bi-weekly horse sale. The auction is a member of the Livestock Marketing Association and the Oklahoma Beef Council. The auction is a strong promoter of the revival of horse slaughter in the United States, family member & Oklahoma State Representative Skye McNiel sponsored the legislation to allow the slaughter of horses in Oklahoma.

Observations:
Investigators arrived at the auction at 4:00pm. Mid America Stockyards is a large, modern facility with restaurant and extensive in- and outdoor pen area.

The indoor pen area next to the auction ring was very hot, no fans were running and there was no water for the horses. Pens were very small and crowded with too many horses in each pen, which resulted in kicking and biting. The outside pens were large and sheltered; all of them were equipped with large water troughs and several of them had access to hay. Investigators counted approx. 85 horses in these pens as well as a few dairy cows. One pen held Haflinger mares with their foals among the other horses, another pen held a very agitated stallion. The mares were observed fighting and kicking, trying to protect their foals.
A Mustang with BLM freeze brand and several severely emaciated horses were also present. A chestnut mare with white socks appeared to be in pain and was extremely thin. The freezemark of the Mustang indicated that he was born 2003 in Teterville Long Term Holding in Kansas and adopted out straight from there.

A large stock trailer pulled up to the loading ramp and a group of paint horses was unloaded. One of them was struggling to walk and was severely limping. Auction workers moved it to the pen area next to the auction ring, where it was put into a crowded pen with other horses.

The auction started at 6:33pm. Horses were moved across a scale right before the auction ring and sold by the head and by the pound. The majority of horses sold to kill buyers with three buyers bidding with the numbers 14, 83 and 89 dividing up most of the horses among them. Buyers for Jeff Smith, Heritage Livestock and George Baker were present, the other buyers could not be identified.

Horses were in the auction ring on average approx. 12-16 seconds. Several mules and donkeys were sold, some of them (sold by the pound) were purchased for as little as $9. Altogether, 241 horses from 72 sellers were sold in 2 hours. The Mustang sold to buyer number 83 for $124. She weighed 775 lbs. Investigators noted that the handling was satisfactory, the workers used flags to move the horses. After the loose horse sale ended, some tack was sold and then the riding horse sale started.

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After the auction was over, only the semi of Heritage Livestock loaded and left. The horses were moved into large outdoor pens in the back of the premises and given hay & water. All smaller buyers loaded and left.

When investigators returned the next morning, a George Baker single deck trailer was backed up to loading ramp. Shortly thereafter, the truck loaded and left the premises. Investigators followed the truck which drove straight to George Baker’s feedlot in Stroud, OK and unloaded. When investigators returned to auction, the trucks of Jeff Smith & Dennis Chinn as well as a 2nd George Baker were at the loading ramps. Jeff Smith and Dennis Chinn both left and headed north, likely to Kansas. The 2nd Baker truck also unloaded his horses at the Stroud feedlot. There was no more activity after that.

3. George Baker Collecting Station, Stroud, OK

Dates:
7/2/13-7/4/13

Location:
Baker Stables
Hwy 66
Stroud, OK

Background Information:
George Baker is a large scale kill buyer who ships hundreds of horses to Presidio, TX every month to supply the Juarez plant in Mexico. Public documents indicate that a lot of his horses are rejected by MX authorities every month for injuries or sickness. In May 2013 alone, the documents indicate shipment of dozens of horses with injuries, shipment of blind horses as well as shipments of horses suffering from colic. Additionally, several horses that were listed on the paperwork were missing at the time of inspection by the Mexican veterinarian.

George Baker also has his own trucking company (DOT 1127211) with multiple trucks, which he uses to ship the horses to Presidio.
Observations:
When investigators arrived at the extensive collecting station in Stroud they noted approx. 350 horses, mules and donkeys in outdoor pens adjacent to a large barn. A loading ramp was visible at the front of the premises. All pens had hay and water buckets, some pens have access to a natural pond.

Some shelter was available, but not for all of the horses. One of the pens held mares with a lot of little foals. Some of the mares already had slaughter tags attached to their hips. Their foals will likely suffer the same fate once they reach 6 month of age and can legally be shipped to slaughter.

Several horses were very thin. One was lying flat on the ground without movement and appeared to be dead. There was a lot of activity at the premises, several truckloads of horses arriving from Mid America Stockyards were unloaded to the pen area.

On July 4th, investigators observed workers gathering horses with ATV’s and moving them towards the loading ramp through a covered chute. Slaughter tags were attached. Workers hit the horses hard over the head and face with sticks in order to make them move into the crowded holding pen next to the ramp.
An hour later, Baker’s truck and single deck trailer backed up to the ramp and started to load. Approx. 33 horses were moved into the trailer. At 12:40pm, the truck left and started heading west. Investigators continued the trailing until they were able to determine that the truck was heading to the Presidio Export pens.

4. Cecil White Collecting Station

**Date:**
7/3/13

**Location:**
Welch Stockyards
10557 S Hwy 2
Welch, OK

**Sale Schedule:**
Livestock Auction: Every Saturday
Horse Sale: Last Tuesday of the month

**Background Information:**
Cecil White is a kill buyer who started shipping horses to Presidio, TX some time ago and now ships several loads a month to the Camargo Plant in Mexico for slaughter. The plant pays White .44 cents a pound. Cecil White is also the owner of Welch Livestock Auction, which serves as a collecting station for his slaughter horses. White is also linked to White’s Equine Sales in Diamond, MO and holds a horse sale there as well.
Observations:
When investigators arrived at collecting station in Welch they noted there were approximately 100 to 150 horses in outdoor pens adjacent to the auction. There was no shelter of any kind. Individual pens had hay and automatic waterers. All of the horses appeared to be in good condition, very few were thin. Some still had auction tags attached.

There was a black truck and a single deck trailer belonging to Parrish Horse Company parked in the parking lot. This truck has been observed in Presidio numerous times and we assume that White uses this company to haul horses to Presidio since he does not have his own trucks. Although our investigators monitored the location for some time, there was no activity.

5. Triple Crown Ranch Collecting Station, Meeker, OK

Date:
7/4/13

Location:
Lincoln County Livestock Auction
345975 E Hwy 62
Meeker, OK

Background Information:
John Carlson, d/b/a/ Triple Crown Ranch, is a large scale kill buyer who is shipping horses to Presidio, TX several times a month. His horses ship to the EU approved Inter Meats plant in Aguascalientes, Mexico. The plant pays Carlson 0.49 cents/lbs. Public documents show that many of the horses shipped by Triple Crown Ranch are rejected by Mexican authorities for sicknesses and injuries. Carlson also runs the bi-monthly horse sale in Sulphur, OK which ensures a steady supply of horses for his shipments.

Observations:
Triple Crown Ranch uses the pen area of the small Lincoln County Livestock Auction in Meeker, OK as a collecting station for their slaughter horses. When investigators arrived at collecting station they noted approx. 80-100 horses in the outdoor pens adjacent to auction.
The individual pens had hay and water buckets, but none of the pens offered any shelter for the horses. The entire pen area was surrounded by high manure piles, blocking the view to some of the pens. Several of the horses observed were very thin and their ribs were clearly showing. Some had auction and/or slaughter tags attached to them.

One horse appeared to be dead, it was lying flat on the ground showing absolutely no movement during time of observation. One of the pens was very crowded, with horses of all sizes/genders mixed within. A small foal was lying beneath its mother among the other horses. A few smaller trucks and stock trailers were parked in front of the pen area. There was no activity at the auction, likely due to the fact that it was the 4th of July. AA will continue to monitor this kill buyer.

6. Sulphur Livestock Auction

**Date:**
7/8/13

**Location:**
1542 US 177
Sulphur, OK

**Sale Schedule:**
Cattle Sale: Every Friday at noon
Horse Sale: Every other Monday 6:00pm.

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**Owner/Manager:**
The auction is owned by Don Young. The horse sale is managed by kill buyers John Carlson & Bill Richardson.

[www.sulphurlivestock.com](http://www.sulphurlivestock.com)

**Observations:**
Animals’ Angels investigators arrived at the small horse sale at 5:00pm. The modern auction consists of a small building with office, auction ring and restaurant as well as a covered pen area with several loading ramps. The pens had metal water troughs installed, however, they were empty during the time of our inspection. There were approx. 50 horses inside the pens and several of them were thin.

The pens were not overcrowded and no fighting was observed. The handling was adequate. A black semi with single deck trailer from Oberlin, KS was parked next to the pen area. The horse sale started at 6:15pm after the tack sale was over. Horses sold at fast pace and the majority of them went to the slaughter buyers.

**Conclusion:**
The investigation revealed that Oklahoma certainly deserves more of our attention. This recent look into the operations of these kill buyers is only the beginning. We plan to monitor this state and these operations very closely.

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