Investigations into the Horse Slaughter Industry in the Texas
August 21 – 25, 2009

1. The Morton Feedlot

Location:
2180 CR 120
East of Morton, TX 79379

Owner/Manager:
The large horse and buffalo feedlot is owned and operated by the BELTEX Corporation. Beltex also owns
Empacadora de Carnes de Fresnillo, a Mexican slaughter plant that continues to slaughter America’s horses.
Ms. Mary Brown is the feedlot manager.

Veterinarian:
Muleshoe Veterinary Clinic
Dr. Larson
Muleshoe, TX 79347

Observations:

8/21/2009 Pen Area
We arrived at the feedlot at 10:34am. Temperature was 68 degrees Fahrenheit and rose to 90 degrees
Fahrenheit with moderate wind. The pens held approximately 700 horses and an unknown number of
bison. The pens contained food and water, however, the pen areas still were exposed to the sun and weather
with no shelter for the animals. It appears that shelter could be constructed in a satisfactory way with
moderate expense.

Texas Penal 42.09. Cruelty to Livestock Animals

Copyright Animals’ Angels Inc.
(a) A person commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly (2) fails unreasonably to provide necessary food, water, or care for a livestock animal in the person's custody.

“Custody” includes responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of a livestock animal subject to the person's care and control, regardless of ownership of the livestock animal. “Necessary food, water, or care” includes food, water, or care provided to the extent required to maintain the livestock animal in a state of good health.

All the horses in the pen area had been ear tagged, which is a Mexican import requirement. We also noticed again a lot of horses with the distinctive bell shaped brand.

We waited until 6pm to observe the pen area closer, since most employees have left the facility by then. We noticed that several horses had fresh injuries, most notably, several had open cuts on their foreheads, which is indicative of having been transported on a double deck trailer. Since we had not observed any other double deck trucks unloading horses, these injured horses were most likely the ones transported from the Carter feedlot in Colorado the day before.

Composting area:

Some horse bones were visible, however, no dead horses or horse parts were found.

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Additional Information:
In 2008 and March 2009 Animals’ Angels filed several complaints with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regarding the carcass disposal at the facility. Documentation of the disposed carcasses was provided along with information about the exact location of these carcasses. During their investigations the TCEQ found out that the feedlot had been operating for years without the required general permit for “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFO). Additionally, the TCEQ investigators found the feedlot to be in violation of 335.6 (Failure to notify of industrial solid waste storage) 
Beltex received order to resolve the violations, but no fines or penalties were assessed. However, the Beltex Corporation had to go through the application process for a CAFO, a quite costly and time consuming endeavor. The Permit #TX G921071 was approved on 2/19/2009

At approximately 8:15pm we observed a yellow truck towing an empty single deck trailer arriving at the feedlot. The truck entered the facility and proceeded to drop off the empty trailer and leave the premises. Due to the light it was impossible to record the DOT number. After that, there was no more activity.

8/22/2009
We returned to the feedlot at 6:30am. We saw a hispanic male beating a horse aggressively with a stick. When we yelled to the individual to stop, he moved away from the horse and went through the pens. However, at 6:40am, a pickup truck with four men approached us a fast pace and forced us to leave our observation spot. We decided to leave Morton and continue our drive south to Socorro, TX to investigate the export pens.

2) Texas Dept. Of Agriculture Export Pens, Socorro, TX

Location:
10800 Socorro Road
El Paso, TX

Owner/Manager:
The export facility is operated by the Texas Department of Agriculture. Manager on site is Mr. Robertson.
Observations:

8/24/2009

We arrived at 7:30am. There were no horses and no personnel that we could see. In the back of the facility there were five empty livestock trailers, two double decks, two single decks and one open roof trailer. The back and the sides of the premises are surrounded by a high, chain linked fence and topped with barb wire. The front of the facility is protected by a recently improved privacy fence to prevent viewing inside the facility from the public road.

However, we were able to conceal ourselves in the fields surrounding the facility. At 07:45am, the gates to the facility opened and employees began to arrive. There was no further activity all day and at 6:00pm the facility closed and the employees left. At this point we left the area as no trucks could arrive to unload horses.

8/25/2008

We returned back to the export pens at 7:00am. The facility was empty and no employees were present. Three trucks with single deck trailers loaded with horses were parked outside the gates waiting for the gates to open. (Trucking Companies: Twin’s Trucking DOT 770277, Chad Trucking, Beltex)

At 07:40am, employees arrived and the trucks entered the facility.

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The yellow truck immediately backed up to the loading ramp. *Of note, this truck was the truck observed at the Morton feedlot the evening of August 21st dropping off an empty trailer.* While waiting to unload his horses, the driver walked along the trailer hitting the sides with a whip.

At 08:15am, the truck began unloading his horses and completed the unloading at 08:26am. The horses appeared reluctant to go down the loading ramp and the driver and an export pen employee went along the sides of the trailer jabbing the horses with sticks through the trailer openings. As the horses went down the ramp, another person beat the horses with a stick to move them along faster. One horse panicked and tried to run back up the ramp. The handlers beat it numerous times on the forehead in order to make it turn around.

At 08:28am, the second truck began unloading. The process for unloading was essentially the same with jabbing the horses through openings in the trailer and another hitting the horses as they came out. Unloading was completed at 08:36am. At 08:38am, the third truck began unloading. Unloading was complete at 08:45am.

The hitting of the horses appeared completely unnecessary and it seems that it is the result of the handlers’ fear of the animals.

**Pen area:**

*Again, the pens did not contain any food or water for the horses.* Many horses were observed searching the water troughs for water and the dusty pen ground for something to eat. Several horses tried to force their heads through the wire fence in order to reach the weeds that were growing along the other side.

- It is a fact that the horses that arrive at the export pen are loaded the night before at the Beltex feedlot in Morton, 315 miles away from Socorro. This trip takes approx. 6 hours and 45 minutes.

- It is also a fact that these horses spend a minimum of 7 hours (facility opens at 8:00am, earliest loading of trucks to Mexico observed was 3:00pm), often much longer (latest loading observed at 7:00pm) at the export pen facility.

- Furthermore, it is a fact that many of this horses are transported to the horse slaughter plant in Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico, which is approx. 815 miles away from Socorro. Animals’ Angels followed one of the trucks in 2008 all the way from the Socorro export pen to the plant, the trip took 16 hours and 30 minutes.
This means that by the time the horses arrive at the plant, they have been without food or water for at least **30 hours and 15 minutes**. And this is **best case scenario**, because the time calculated does not include any possible breaks the drivers might take on route for fueling or to get food as well as traffic congestion, delays at the border crossing or accidents.

**To deprive horses from food and water for that length of time is in our opinion completely unacceptable, cruel and against the law.**

1) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9, Chapter I, Part 88, Section 88.4, states:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART 88 COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION OF EQUINES FOR SLAUGHTER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sec. 88.4 Requirements for transport.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(a) Prior to the <strong>commercial transportation of equines to a</strong></td>
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<td><strong>slaughtering facility</strong>, the owner/shipper must:</td>
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<td>(1) For a period of <strong>not less than 6 consecutive hours immediately</strong></td>
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<td><strong>prior to the equines being loaded on the conveyance</strong>, provide each equine</td>
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<td><strong>appropriate food (i.e., hay, grass, or other food that would allow an</strong></td>
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<td><strong>equine in transit to maintain well-being), potable water, and the</strong></td>
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<td><strong>opportunity to rest</strong>;</td>
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**Definition Owner/Shipper:**
Any individual, partnership, corporation, or cooperative association that engages in the commercial transportation of more than 20 equines per year to slaughtering facilities.

The **Beltex Corporation** is the owner/shipper of the horses shipped from Morton to the export pens. The law is clear: The horses have to have access to food and water immediately prior to being shipped to a **slaughtering facility**. Giving them food and water prior to being shipped to the export pen is not enough to fulfill what the regulations require.

2) Texas Penal Code 42.09 states:

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<td>(5) “Livestock animal” means:</td>
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<td>(B) a horse, pony, mule, donkey, or hinny;</td>
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<td>(6) “Necessary food, water, or care” includes food, water, or care provided to the <strong>extent required to maintain the livestock animal in a state of good health</strong>.</td>
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The typical 1,000 to 1,200 pound horse will have to drink a minimum of 6-10 gallons/day to maintain its health and well being. Hot weather will increase this minimum.

The Texas Department of Agriculture has the responsibility for the health and welfare of the horses while they are at their facility. Additionally,

- the Texas Department of Agriculture has access to the export paperwork and is therefore well aware of loading location, travel time and final destination of the horses passing through their facility.
- the Texas Department of Agriculture charges 5USD for each animal that passes through their facility. According to their own website, that fee includes “necessary” water.
- according to their website, the Texas Department of Agriculture “works.....to ensure the welfare of all livestock processed through the export pen facilities”

**Transport conditions:**

The investigation also revealed that the horses are still transported into Mexico on inhumane open roof trailers. The horses hit their heads on the piping and get stucked in between. Furthermore, there is no protection from the elements.

9 CFR, Part 88.3 states:

**Sec. 88.3 Standards for conveyances.**

(a) The animal cargo space of conveyances used for the commercial transportation of equines to slaughtering facilities must:

(1) Be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that at all times protects the health and well-being of the equines being transported.