



## Animals' Angels Investigation at the Slaughter Horse Feedlot in Morton, TX

### 1. General Information

**Location:**

2180 CR 120  
Morton, TX 79379

**Owner/Manager:**

- "Frontier Meat" is a large horse and buffalo feedlot. The facility is owned and operated by the BELTEX Corporation. The Nauwelaers Family from Belgium owns the BELTEX Corporation and Eric Nauwelaers serves as President. Their former horse slaughter plant in Ft. Worth is still open and continues to slaughter bison and wild boar. Beltex also owns *Empacadora de Carnes de Fresnillo*, a Mexican slaughter plant that continues to slaughter America's horses.

- Office manager is Ms. Mary Ketcherside/Brown.

**INFORMATION ABOUT FEEDLOT:**

The feedlot had approx. 900 head of horses and 500 head of bison/buffalo during the time of the investigation.

**Veterinarian:**

Muleshoe Veterinary Clinic  
Dr. Larson  
Muleshoe, TX 79347

### 2. Observations

**08-03-08**

We arrived in Morton at 11:30 pm. One mile from the feedlot we observed a truck with a large livestock trailer parked on the side of road with the DOT# 770277 registered to Twins Trucking.

**08-04-08**

12:39am-1:33am A pick-up truck entered the feedlot. A Semi truck with a livestock trailer attached was observed entering from CR 197, which runs along the southwest side of the feedlot.

1:44am-2:00am

Numerous horses were loaded onto both of the trailers. We could hear the sound of hooves hitting the trailer floor and men shouting and yelling as the horses were being loaded. As soon as the one trailer was loaded they began loading the 2<sup>nd</sup> trailer.

2:09am

The first truck and trailer loaded with horses left the feedlot. The truck turned onto Hwy 114 and headed towards Morton.

2:30am

The Twins Trucking truck entered the feedlot.

3:00am

Two trucks loaded with horses left the feedlot and started driving south on Highway 214. Both trucks were driving extremely fast, maintaining a speed of 80mph. We followed the trucks until we could be certain that they were heading to the Socorro export pens, then we returned to the feedlot. We arrived at the facility at 6:51am. The gates were already open and a vehicle was parked in front of the office. When close to the feedlot numerous horses could be heard coughing and nickering. Throughout the day we watched from a distance for further activity but none was observed.

6.21pm

We walked along the fence to take a closer look at the horses inside the feedlot. They all appeared to have food and water. We did not see any injured animals. We found several horses with a bell brand. During prior investigations we already noted the same brand at the export pens in Socorro and at Morton, indicating that a lot of the slaughter bound horses came from the same farm/ranch. At the southwest side of the property, we noticed a strong smell of decaying animals. We found several horse parts, barely covered with soil that could be seen from the road.



*Horse with slaughter tag and bell brand*



*Dead foal outside of fence at southwest corner*

8:44pm

The Twins Trucking truck returned and parked at the same spot along the road than the day before.

**08/05/08**

9:53am

The gate was already open and several cars were parked in the parking lot.

9:57am

We observed two men on a backhoe transporting a dead horse towards the southwest side of the property, where they off-loaded it in the composting area. We found several horse carcasses, and multiple horse parts in the field. Some of the carcasses had not been covered with composting

material. As we stepped out of the car onto CR 197 we noticed a decomposing foal at our feet. Coyotes were observed eating the flesh of the deceased horses.



*Dead horse on backhoe*



*Dead horse at Frontier Meats*



*Decomposing leg*



*Carcass*

We returned to our car and observed the feedlot for the rest of the day.

6:42 pm

Again, the Twins Trucking truck returned and parked at the same location than the day before.

**8/06/07**

7:53am

The horses were being fed by a feedlot employee.

8:04 am

Mary Ketcherside/Brown arrived. We stayed until 1:30pm, but there was no more activity.

3:00pm

Shortly after we had left the feedlot, we observed Trenton D. Saulters (DOT 1754583) truck with a double deck trailer driving towards Morton. He had horses loaded onto both decks.



### Investigation Follow-up:

Animals' Angels filed a complaint 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 the following weeks we were informed that:

- There had already been two more complaints about the feedlots composting practices in 2008 (4/18/08 and 7/21/08). TCEQ claimed that in both cases the complaint allegations could not be verified.
- However, during their investigation the TCEQ found out that the feedlot has been **operating for years** without the required general permit for "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations" (CAFO). Beltex received a Notice of Violation, but **no fines or penalties were assessed**
- Beltex applied on July 24, 2008 for the required permit. The permit has not been issued yet, but a permit number has already been assigned. (#TXG921071)
- Another investigation was conducted on August 12, 2008 to address our complaint. **Just like the two times before and despite the extensive documentation provided, TCEQ claimed that there were no dead animals or parts visible.** However, the TCEQ investigators found the feedlot to be in violation of 335.6 (Failure to notify of industrial solid waste storage) On August 29, 2008 another Notice of Violation was issued. **Again, no fines or penalties were assessed.**

### Other concerns:

While the feedlot seems to provide adequate food and water for the animals, they do not provide any shelter for the animals inside the lot, which is a violation of Texas law.



## **Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter § 821.021**

### **DEFINITION.**

In this subchapter, "cruelly treated" includes tortured, seriously overworked, unreasonably abandoned, **unreasonably deprived of necessary food, care, or shelter**, cruelly confined, or caused to fight with another animal.

### **§ 42.09. Cruelty to Livestock Animals**

(a) A person commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly:

- (1) tortures a livestock animal;
- (2) fails unreasonably to provide necessary food, water, or care for a livestock animal in the person's custody;
- (3) abandons unreasonably a livestock animal in the person's custody;
- (4) transports or confines a livestock animal in a cruel and unusual manner;
- (5) administers poison to a livestock animal, other than cattle, horses, sheep, swine, or goats, belonging to another without legal authority or the owner's effective consent;
- (6) causes one livestock animal to fight with another livestock animal or with an animal as defined by Section 42.092;
- (7) uses a live livestock animal as a lure in dog race training or in dog coursing on a racetrack;
- (8) trips a horse; or
- (9) seriously overworks a livestock animal.