The Transport and slaughter of American horses in Mexico

Border Crossing between the United States and Mexico

10/14
We parked at the “Zaragoza” bridge. There is a separate line for all trucks crossing the border. A lot of trucks were standing in line to get into the US. We talked to border officials and they confirmed that horses are being brought across the border here. Furthermore, they informed us that the Zaragosa border crossing is closed between 11pm and 8am.

8.45 pm We left our observation point.

10/15
12pm: We observed an empty truck crossing into the US. The truck had a red cab and an open single deck trailer.

DOT : 776856
Grupo Lara Villalobos
Salvador Lara Lujan
C Pina NO 6016
Juarez, CI 32690

1.27pm: Another truck from the same trucking company with a white cab and a single deck trailer entered the US empty.

6.15pm: The red truck returned with a full load of horses. We decided to wait for the white truck to return as well.
7.10pm: The second truck returned to Mexico and we followed.
7.31pm: The truck entered the slaughter plant. A gate secures the premises and we could not follow the truck in.
Information about the Juarez plant:

Rastro Municipal (plant is owned and operated by the city of Juarez)
Manager: Luis Terrazas Munoz
Veterinarian: Jose Cuellar
Plant approved by the European Union: No

7.54pm: The truck unloaded the horses in the pens at the back of the slaughter plant. Another empty double deck trailer was parked on site. We parked on a road adjacent to the pens from were we could see the unloading area. The unloading went very quickly and the horses rushed into a pen at the rear of the slaughter plant.

10/16

8.30am: We continued to observe the holding pens at slaughter plant. There was a lot of activity here, some horses were being move around. Cattle were also present in some of the pens. The horses from last night were still in same pen. Not all of them had green USDA slaughter tags. After we obtained some footage of the horses, we returned to the border.

11.24am: The same white truck and the red truck with the open single deck trailer crossed into the US again empty.
11.55am: A blue truck with an open single trailer crossed into the US empty. The truck belonged to the same company than the other two trucks observed earlier: “Grupo Lara Villabos”
12:20pm: We left the border to return to the plant in Juarez and check on the double trailer that was parked there yesterday.

12.56pm: The trailer was still in the same spot. The horses delivered yesterday had been moved to different pens. The plant must have been slaughtering during the morning, because many of the horses were gone.
2.00pm: We returned to the border.
3.09pm: The blue truck from the morning returned with a full load of horses.
4.02pm: The truck arrived at the plant in Juarez and unloaded the horses into the same pen.

Copyright Animals’ Angels Inc.
The horses were constantly hitting their heads on the metal piping and were getting stucked with their necks in between the pipes.

6.10pm: The police arrived and questioned us. After explaining what we were doing, they left.
7.00pm: The two other trucks that crossed in to the US this morning still had not returned to the plant. We decided to drive towards Jerez.
8.30pm: One hour south of Juarez, we encountered 4 trucks loaded with horses. Three of them pulled large double deck trailers and the other one an open single deck.

Information on the trucking company:

DOT: 555427
Chavez Trucking
Jesus Rafael Chavez Corral
Otono # 9-A
Hidalgo de Parral, CI 33880
8.50pm: At a toll station, we walked up to the trucks and were told by one driver that he would be delivering to Chihuahua and that his horses were not destined for slaughter. One of the other drivers told us that his destination is indeed Zacatecas. He said that they crossed the border at the “Santa Fe” bridge in Juarez and that they are not allowed anymore to load horses onto 2 levels. He said that one horse is worth approximately 700.00 USD.

10.36pm: All trucks entered a “Zoosanitaria” checkpoint.

11.11pm: The trucks entered a toll plaza in Chihuahua.

11.55pm: The trucks passed the exit for the main road to Zacatecas, still heading towards Chauhtemoc and Parral. As it turned out they were taking this route to avoid some toll plazas.

10/17

12.00am: All trucks stopped at gas station.

12.29am: One of the trucks left the convoy.

1.50am: The three remaining trucks stopped at truck stop. The drivers checked on the horses with torches.

1.56am: The trucks continued driving.

2.40am: The trucks stopped at the Chavez headquarter in Parral. There are several other empty trailer on the premises.

3.00am: All three trucks continued driving.

3:57am: The trucks stopped at another “Zoosanitaria” checkpoint.

5.21am: The trucks stopped again at a toll plaza. One of the drivers confirmed that the horses were going for slaughter in Zacatecas but he refused to tell us where.

7.07am: The convoy entered another toll plaza. We approached the trucks in order to check on the horses. They looked extremely tired and in distress. Again, we observed the taller horses constantly hitting their heads on the metal pipes. Several were holding their heads low. Fortunately, all of them were still standing. We counted 36 horses on the open deck trailer.
7.35am: The trucks stopped at another “Zoosanitaria” checkpoint. We were informed that at these checkpoints the paperwork is checked, but not the horses.
8.06am: The trucks turned into a gas station.
8.30am: The trucks continued driving.

9.13am: The trucks enter another “Zoosanitaria” checkpoint.
11.00am: The trucks stopped again at gas station near Fresnillo. We checked on the horses again, they were all still standing.
11.13am: A police car arrived. They informed us that they were told we were causing the drivers trouble. However, after we explained to him what we were doing, they stated that they had no problem with us and left.

11.16am: The trucks continued driving.

12.20pm: In Jerez, the drivers took a back road to the plant to avoid the city. Apparently these drivers know the route very well and drive it regularly.

12.31pm: The trucks arrived at the plant.

**Distance travelled from Juarez: 805 miles**

**Hours of travel since trucks were encountered: 16 hours and 30 minutes.**

Given the fact that we started trailing them one hour south of Juarez, it is fair to say that the total driving time from the Socorro export pens to the plant is approximately 18 hours. When being asked, one of the drivers confirmed this time.

Additional information:

Mexico does not have any “hours of service regulations” for truck drivers, which means that one driver could drive all the way from Socorro to Jerez.

**Information about the Jerez horse slaughter plant:**

Carnicos de Jerez S.A. de CV  
Carretera a Jerez KM. 27.5  
Jerez, CP 99380  
Zacatecas, Mexico  
Phone: 494-94-54046  
Email: canazacl@prodigy.canaza or canazac1@prodigy.net.mx  
Manager: Adriana Solana  
Plant approved by the European Union: Yes

The Jerez plant is owned by the Dutch company Visser & Van Walsum.

**Contact Information:**

Visser & Van Valsum  
Industrial Parc Boezembocht  
Overwegwachter 1  
3034 KG Rotterdam, the Netherlands  
Tel: +31 (0)10 413 94 00  
Fax: +31 (0)10 413 94 05  
www.visservanvalsum.com

The company supplies horsemeat to wholesale customers and butcher shops in France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Austria. According to public documents, in 2008, 85 shipments with a total volume of more than 4 Million lbs were send to Europe.

The company claims on their homepage that Mexican horses are slaughtered at the Jerez plant, that lived “a stress-free life as farm animals” and that the meat is “lower on protein content than in the
USA”. These statements could not be confirmed during our investigation. Most of the horses inside the pen area had the green USDA slaughter tags, which document their US origin.

The trucks entered the parking lot of the plant and backed up to the pen area and the loading ramps. The unloading was done very quickly. All horses walked off the trucks.

There was a lot of activity in the slaughter area, we observed a lot of workers in white coats and boots. A couple of people were moving horses around within the pens. There were approximately 100 – 125 horses inside the pen area. Most of them had the green USDA slaughter tag attached to them. Several looked emaciated. We did not see any injured horses.
Just like during our last visit, we saw many horses with a C and Arrow brand or with large numbers on their backs. The large number brand is characteristic for PMU mares, the number corresponds to the stall in which the mare is kept tethered for six months or more.

We also noticed that there is a new looking solid steel fence in front of loading ramp and to the left side slaughter area.

We were approached by the slaughter plant guard, who appeared extremely agitated. We decided to leave.

**Conclusions:**

The investigation revealed that:

- Still many American horses are transported to the plant in Juarez, which is not approved by the European Union because of the use of the “Puntilla Knife method”
- Horses are still transported on inhumane open trailers, which offer the animals not enough head room and no protection from the elements. In addition, the risk of injuries is high due to the metal piping across the top of the trailer.
- The 800 mile long transport from the export pens to the plant in Jerez takes 18 hours – a journey way too long for these already weakened animals.