

HORSE RACING THROUGH THE SLAUGHTER PIPELINE

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Part 1. Food For Thought

“Graceful and sleek, the beautiful bay racehorse was used to the thunder of applause as she swept past the grandstand — not the sound of a rifle. The seven-year-old mare had raced at courses up and down the country, nostrils flaring, long neck straining and mane flying in the wind as she approached the winning post. However, earlier this month, her career ended unceremoniously with one last outing —to the slaughterhouse.

She was led into a 12 ft square metal stall and killed with a bullet fired from the 'meat man's' .22 rifle into her brain.

No more crowds, galloping hooves up the home straight or champagne corks popping. That single shot was the last sound she heard.” [1]

FOR DECADES horse racing has been touted as the “Sport of Kings”, resplendent with charismatic beauty, energy and awe-inspiring competition of humankind’s most celebrated and noble companions.

What once began as a sport that captivated the masses in pursuit of exhilarating recreation and honed the excellence of horsemanship required in battle has now become but a mass-producing genetic assembly line in an absurd quest for racing excellence fueled by greed. The consequences of this development are not pretty.

The multi-billion dollar racing industry cultivates the fallacious impression of retired racehorses living lives of luxury, grazing in fields of Kentucky bluegrass, serving as pampered family pets or well-provided-for riding horses and the like.

In reality the vast majority of thoroughbreds (2 out of every 3) coming off the track, regardless of their health, are either euthanized, abandoned or slaughtered for their meat.

Most of these are young, healthy horses who simply have not met their owner’s expectations or injured during the grueling task of training and racing while pumped full of drugs. [2]

Only a small number of the whole are considered good enough for breeding which is primarily reserved for only the best in the industry. For thousands of Thoroughbreds that do not make the grade, whatever the reason, the end is both terrifying and brutal.

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Intentional or not, the horse racing industry now subsists as a principal tributary of the slaughter pipeline — a confluence where magnificent bloodstock race for their lives toward the equine version of the river Styx — the river that separates the world of the living from that of the dead.

[1] <http://tiny.cc/5thkg>

[2] Allin, Jane; "The Chemical Horse", Int'l Fund for Horses, April 2011

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Part 2: The Racehorse As A Commodity — Overbreeding Revisited

WITH the economic globalization of the horse racing industry that has occurred over the last 40 to 50 years the once splendid and prestigious nature of the sport has been eclipsed by the lucrative value of Thoroughbreds driven by world economic markets.

In fact the current mass production of the Thoroughbred as a performance animal can be likened to a practice analogous to the factory farming of domestic livestock for slaughter.

As the modern Thoroughbred transcended from the status of the noble sport horse to the gainful foundation of global financial empires, with it came the ultimate betrayal and demotion to the doctrine of *Speciesism* – an anthropogenic truism that all species of animals are inferior to humankind and may therefore be used for benefit without regard to the suffering inflicted upon them.

No longer is the horse held in highest esteem but instead as a disposable commodity surrendered to secondary status as a result of economic interest and greed.

While over-breeding in the racing industry is the derivation of availability, inbreeding, and drugs are inescapably interconnected with the callous and brutal practice of slaughter as is the insatiable demand for horse meat for human consumption principally in European and Asian cultures.

Inbreeding and drugs have weakened the modern Thoroughbred while the horse meat industry remains a lucrative multi-million dollar enterprise.

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Since the 1980's globalized production has spiraled into massive economies of scale given the introduction of syndicates and the influx of wealthy multinationals from Europe, the Middle East and Japan for example.

The current state of the horse racing industry seems possessed with a thirst for profit and achievement beyond comprehension at the expense of the very creatures that render it viable. As a result, the comparatively small number of horses that are able to be absorbed by the industry cannot compensate the numbers that are mass produced in its zealous pursuit of profit above equine welfare.

These ill-fated, voiceless souls are at the mercy of breeders vying for the next genetic hit; the horse that will surpass all others.

Sadly, in the wake of this realm of greed and power domination these horses suffer irreparably from incessant inbreeding leading to genetically induced infirmities, drug abuse and ultimately, together with the main driving force of slaughter – over breeding – are the pawns of a global disposable system of the multi-million dollar horse racing industry, the so-called “Sport of Kings”.

If truth be told there is nothing remotely royal anymore about the tragedy horse racing has become.

Numbers Don't Lie

On an annual basis over 100,000 Thoroughbreds are produced each year wherein the US is the most prolific country in terms of foal crops holding almost 30% of the world's foal population. Together with 10 other countries, this makes up about 83% of the global crop which over the last few decades has progressively increased approximately 6-fold to massive proportions.

The foal crop for 2009 (108, 572) was somewhat lower than figures for 2008 (114,804) representing an overall decline of about 5%. Significant reductions were observed in Australia, Uruguay, Ireland and Canada with decreases of 10%, 14%, 18% and 29% respectively.

[SEE TABLE 1 NEXT PAGE]

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Table 1. Top Thoroughbred Breeding Countries (2009)
(<http://www.jockeyclub.com/factbook.asp?section=17>)

Country	Number of Foals Born	% Global Breeding
USA	31,750	29.2
Australia	16,112	14.8
Ireland	10,167	9.4
Argentina	8,471	7.8
Japan	7,453	6.9
Great Britain	5,652	5.2
France	5,524	5.1
New Zealand	4,224	3.9
Brazil	2,922	2.7
Uruguay	1,803	1.7
Canada	1,803	1.7

Total number of foals worldwide (2009) = 108,572

Data taken from The Jockey Club for North America are predictive of the overall global situation in terms of foal crops albeit proportionately larger in number as a function of the percentage of global breeding.

As shown in shown in Table 2 and Figure 1, NA statistics lend insight into the nightmare that breeding has become.

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**Table 2. Number of 2 YO Starters Compared to
Number of Foals in Crop Year**
(<http://www.jockeyclub.com/factbook.asp?section=11>)

Racing Year	2YO Starters	All Starters	Crop Year	Foals Born in Crop Year	Difference in Foals*
2009	11,251	71,662	2007	37,400	26,148
2008	11,442	72,638	2006	38,079	26,637
2007	11,673	72,996	2005	38,359	26,686
2006	11,695	72,729	2004	37,946	26,251
2005	11,197	72,780	2003	37,063	25,886
2004	10,843	74,206	2002	35,976	25,133
TOTAL	68,012			224,823	156,721

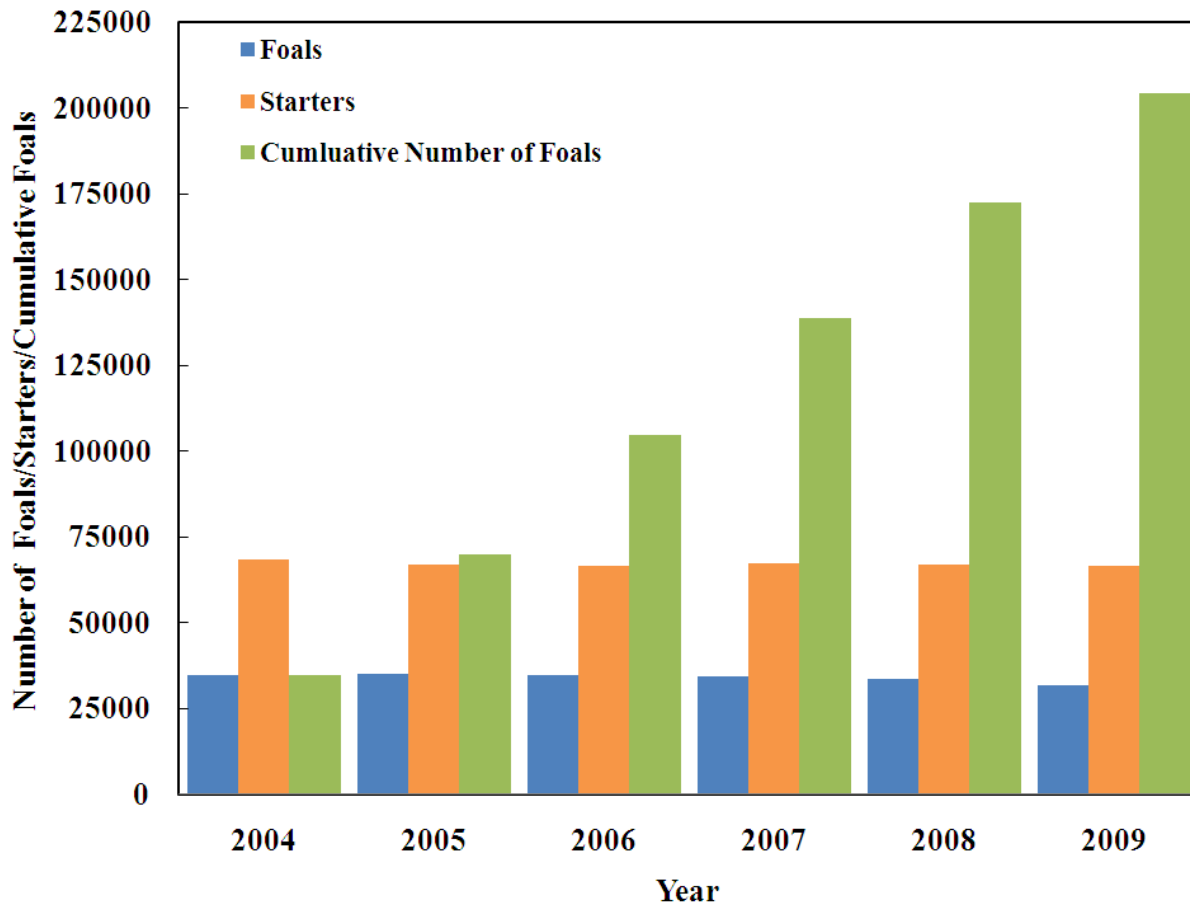
*Difference in number of foals = number of foals in crop year – number of 2YO starters.

[SEE FIGURE 1 NEXT PAGE]

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Figure 1. N.A. Foals and Starters per Year and Cumulative No. of Foals Produced (2004-2009)

(<http://www.jockeyclub.com/factbook.asp>)



Over a period of 6 racing years from 2004 to 2009, of the 224,823 foals that were born during the crop years (2002 to 2007) only 68,102 as 2 YOs were actually entered into a race (or 30%). What happened to the other 70%?

While it is true that some owners wait to race their horses at an older age, it is certainly not the norm. In fact, most Thoroughbreds today are only raced between the ages of 2 and 6 after which, for the most part, become a nuisance to their owners – burdensome beasts who no longer turn a profit.

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Even if some of these foals didn't start their careers until the age of 3, it is unlikely that this number would be equivalent to the number unaccounted for. Some clarification of these data arises when a sampling of breeding stallions and the number of starters they have sired is examined.

For reasonable statistical validity Table 3 shows several of the top 150 stallions on the General Sires list taken from The Blood-Horse source publications.

Although only a sampling of the 150 sires are on the list for 2010, the percentages of starters and winners is representative of the whole for the Northern Hemisphere, and include foal counts from the Southern Hemisphere as well as some additional foreign foals and stakes winners from all countries.

**Table 3. Sample of Leading Sires Foal Crop,
Starters and Winners, 2010**

<http://www.tbhsource.com/horse-racing/thoroughbred-breeding/sire-lists/archive/2010/general>

SIRE	NUMBER OF FOALS	STARTERS / RUNNERS		WINNERS	
		Number	%	Number	%
Giant's Causeway	257	106	41	53	20
Distorted Humor	230	93	40	62	26
Malibu Moom	69	30	43	22	31
Smart Strike	361	217	60	160	44
More Than Ready	76	22	28	15	19

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Elusive Quality	258	107	41	60	23
Tale of the Cat	395	204	51	120	30
Unbridled Song	704	392	55	251	35
Stormy Atlantic	183	81	44	42	22
Street Cry	30	8	26	3	10
Dynaformer	1230	851	69	607	49
Indian Charlie	184	77	41	56	30
Arch	159	87	54	61	38
Tiznow	89	30	33	17	19
Northern Afleet	71	29	40	28	20
AP Indy	1369	891	65	610	44
Pulpit	329	170	51	109	33
Successful Appeal	59	18	30	7	11
Lemon Drop Kid	117	45	38	23	19
Quiet American	894	595	66	423	47
TOTAL	7064	4053	...	2721	...

The numbers deliver a culpable portrayal of the waste and callousness that exist in the industry. Over 40% of the foals produced as registered Thoroughbreds never engage in a career on the track and only 38% of those who race actually win. What caliber of races do these horses win and what then happens to those that never see the track on race day or are unsuccessful in their endeavors?

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Here is more food for thought.

“The Jockey Club, the national registry of thoroughbreds headquartered in Lexington, Ky., reports that approximately 35,000 thoroughbreds are foaled in North America each year, 68 percent of which are destined for a career on the racetrack. Of those horses, nearly 70 percent will win at least one race, but only 5 percent will win a bigger-pursed stakes race, and only two-tenths of a percent will win a Grade I stakes race, which awards the biggest purse and creates the biggest superstars.” [1]

This means, on average, of the approximately 68,000 2YOs that started between 2004 and 2009 (Table 2), only about 3,400 won a bigger-pursed stakes race and a mere 136 of those horses actually made it to the pinnacle of horse racing glory. On calculating this means that only 0.06% of the total crop from 2002 to 2007 can be likened to the Secretariat's of the racing world.

With tens of thousands of foals brought into this world on an annual basis throughout the global racing industry, the odds of a champion being born in any given year remains small from a relative perspective. As to the fate of the horses who fail to make the big league or never make it to the track the lack of foresight or concern for their welfare is a perfunctory component of the exploitation of the Thoroughbred as a disposable commodity.

“For every Big Brown or Rachel Alexandra winning millions in front of sold-out crowds, there are unheralded thoroughbreds — such as State Deputy — [who] also race their hearts out each day, but for small purses on cheaper tracks to nearly empty stands. Eventually, lackluster performance or an injury ends these horses' careers. At least 3,000 such racehorses are retired each year, usually by age 6 if not younger, the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation estimates. Given that most horses live well into their 20s, the question of what to do with them for the next 15 or more years looms.” [2]

[1] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp->

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dyn/content/article/2010/05/21/AR2010052103337_2.html?sid=ST2010052804823
[2] Ibid.

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Part 3: Slaughter — A Convenient Alternative

SLAUGHTER, disassembly lines of death, or as some slaughterhouse workers describe it, assembly lines working in reverse.

The slaughter of racehorses – the grisly nadir of the horse racing industry – has become a convenient and lucrative alternative to accountability, where breeders focus solely on economic incentives whether they are acquired in the breeding shed, yearling sales or on the track.

Regardless of a horse's status, champion or also-ran, racehorses are habitually discarded to auction, kill buyers or directly to slaughterhouses once their most profitable and successful days are over.

Innumerable Thoroughbreds who have enamored passionate and loyal fans at racetracks worldwide are cheated of the opportunity to end their lives in dignity. Until the tragic deaths of two celebrated American champions — Ferdinand and Exceller — in foreign slaughterhouses, it was not widely known that it is commonplace for "retired" racehorses to spend their spend final moments in terror and panic at the hands of the abattoir's "Grim Reaper".

Since this time, exposure of the slaughter of racehorses has led to worldwide recognizance which has evolved into both an emotional and heated topic with proponents on both sides of the argument.

Moreover, despite the notion by pro-horse slaughter organizations that slaughter is a "necessary" evil arising from an "unwanted horse" dilemma it is in fact a profitable business driven by demand of horse meat for human consumption in European and Asian countries. And so, the racing industry has a decidedly convenient tactic for disposal of its athletes that clearly explains the high attrition rate in the industry and the disgusting slaughter of otherwise healthy animals.

Some apparently tactless owners have gone so far as to have made a deliberate mockery of the slaughter issue.

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With names such as "Gourmet Dinner" and "Prime Cut" one wonders whether this constitutes a deplorable sense of humor given the horrible fate that awaits many racehorses, or whether it is an earnest effort to make a compelling anti-slaughter statement intended to provoke public outcry and bring the slaughter issue to the forefront of racing.

It is not just the public, but also the horse racing industry, that claim respect for the horse is first and foremost in their minds.

But who, pray tell, is sending these horses to slaughter?

Regardless of the shallow promises, the tragedy continues, fueled by the very people who claim that these magnificent animals should be afforded a retirement fitting to their efforts and accomplishments.

From a global perspective, the slaughter of Thoroughbreds is ubiquitous despite the taboo associated with the consumption of horse meat in any given country (e.g. Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, etc.).

However, for the most part, there is limited information as to the actual numbers of Thoroughbreds that find their way to the slaughterhouse. This is the case for most countries and data is scarce for a number of reasons primarily associated with lack of record keeping and traceability.

In truth, the racing industry's deficiency in accounting for the horses that come off of the track, or who have finished their breeding careers, has contributed significantly to the number of Thoroughbreds that end up in the kill pens.

In particular, claiming races can lead to an increased risk for slaughter, especially if these horses are mature. Claiming races are intended for those horses who cannot compete at the top or even intermediate ranks of racing and provide horse owners and trainers an opportunity to "unload" these less than stellar performers while still turning a modest profit.

Typically when a horse is "claimed" the original owner or breeder fails to follow the career path of the horse wherein several exchanges may occur over time leading to downward mobility in the chain of claiming events.

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Sadly, many of these horses will fall under the auspices of purely business-like owners who will discard them when they can no longer race competitively. Given that the claiming race concept is to further the career paths of “typical” horses, in fact, more often than not, it defeats the purpose. Unfortunately there are far too many claiming races in the industry wholly as a result of over-breeding.

Still more sinister are those individuals that simply load a losing or injured horse directly onto the “meat man’s” truck when he stops by the track to pick up the “has-beens”. This means no records, no questions, no problem.

Moreover, it is widely known that some breeders and trainers have clandestine arrangements with auction facilities that guarantee their horses will be shipped directly to slaughter. Friends of Equines in the U.S. uncovered one such location in New Holland, Pennsylvania.

“ . . . MEL HOOVER of 'Mels' Stables & Auction Barn' at 834 Wallace Rd, New Holland, Pa, has a 'secret pact' with certain racehorse owners who want to 'get rid' of their unwanted horses without having to fear they might be sold elsewhere or rescued by rescuers or anybody else who 'might' discover things about those horses such as lame horses that were being raced. . . . some racehorse owners & trainers INSIST on bringing their horses to Mel Hoovers Place, as he guarantees them to 'destroy the evidence' of running lame horses!”
[1]

It seems it is no different in other countries. British Thoroughbreds suffer the same fate.

Asked if they slaughter thoroughbreds, he replied: 'Yeah, we get every sort of horse.' Asked how many, he said: 'We must do about 2-3,000 racehorses a year.' Asked which trainers use the slaughterhouse, he named several, including Ginger McCain, the trainer of Red Rum. 'Ginge is very comical, he's down to earth. He doesn't bring us that many, a couple a year. Harvey Smith comes here quite a lot.' Smith is the former showjumping champion whose wife now trains racehorses.” [2]

The crux of the problem is that the racing industry breeds for flawlessness together with the

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reality that over-breeding has reached critical enormity. Slaughter offers a most convenient option especially given the cost of maintaining a horse that no longer can perform – whether due to injury or simply as a result of a spent horse. And, there is a thriving market for it.

Care for a single racehorse can cost as much as \$50,000 per year, so for many unscrupulous owners the solution is the slaughter pipeline.

While the racing industry continues to woo the public for its support it fails to offer any credible rationalization for the paradox that its treatment of its athletes has become. In spite of this, it continues to breed to excess only to turn its back on what happens to these magnificent, yet vulnerable creatures.

[1] <https://goo.gl/4gSQ91>

[2] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/01/horseracing.sport>

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Part 4: Racehorse Slaughter Knows No Boundaries

THE horror of slaughtering racehorses has no international borders.

— NORTH AMERICA

"Overbreeding takes care of itself through the expedient clearance measure of horse slaughter."

APPARENTLY the attrition rate is more or less in equilibrium with the birth rate. This opportunely explains that in reality there is no cumulative effect of foals simply because the racing industry disposes of the same number or more on an annual basis.

Overbreeding takes care of itself through the expedient clearance measure of horse slaughter.

As in other countries it is estimated the preponderance of Thoroughbreds that end up at the slaughterhouse are young and primarily healthy, some with minor injuries that would require

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time for rehabilitation which most owners are unwilling to pay for and others that have reached the end of their racing or breeding careers.

“The breeders and trainers don’t call it going to slaughter, they call it going to auction, though they know darn well there is not a huge market for half-grown thoroughbreds who really don’t have any particular future. They get bought for meat.” [5]

In any case, all of these horses have many years of quality life ahead of them, snuffed out by the insatiable and all-engulfing appetite of lust for power and money.

The shallowness of these actions in light of the grandeur of the horse is unthinkable but in reality horse racing has descended from glory to business enterprise with the horse as the sacrificial lamb.

One of the most reprehensible issues in NA concerns the sponsorship by the US government in their provision of breeding incentives.

It is indeed a productive market where horses are valued largely for the first two years of their life; yearling sales and aesthetics taking the forefront in a fashion show for the wealthy of the world.

“A non-horse person might be surprised to learn that the breeding farms receive both huge breeding incentives from their perspective breeding associations as well as huge tax advantages and write-offs from the IRS. This further encourages breeding strategies that are not consistent with demand. These industries continue to promote breeding in large numbers, even while the demand for these horses does not exist! When you throw in the current state of the economy on top of the overpopulation problem and add in the breeding plans for coming years, the future seems rather bleak for American horses.

“The Lexington Herald-Leader (newspaper) published the Kentucky Horse Breeders Incentives Awards. The fund generated 19.2 Million Dollars (\$19,220,007) (!!) The money comes from taxes from the horse races. If these associations were truly concerned with the welfare of the horse and the horse overpopulation problem as they say they are, would these funds still be distributed to horse breeders? The more ethical thing to do would be to make humane euthanasia funds out of these taxes instead, for injured and sick horses who's owners cannot afford it.” [6]

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Unfortunately not all that strut the runway are genuine “Rolex” and swiftly become cheapened to knock offs. The only problem with this is that few are willing to embrace these fallen idols, unlike the market for inanimate items that have no life breath yet breathe life into the beholder. In the racing world there is nothing beholding to the owner of a mediocre Thoroughbred as the cost exceeds the worth from a cold and calculated commercial perspective.

To add more misery to an already disheartening situation one must not forget about the nurse mares and their foals – the practice of replacing a mare’s own foal with one of more value, the celebrated Thoroughbred foal. It is estimated that in the Thoroughbred industry alone the numbers of unwanted foals produced in this way is as high as 50,000 per year depending on the number of mares bred and who conceive. [7]

Although these innocent creatures are too young to legally ship to slaughter they are nonetheless sold to the tanning industry where they are skinned to manufacture high-end leather products. Different pipelines perhaps but slaughter just the same.

Not only is the slaughter of Thoroughbreds in NA a tragic case of licentious waste and disrepute it also is a potentially lethal sentence for those who consume the flesh of these “recycled” creatures. It is without doubt that virtually every racehorse in North America has been administered “Bute” and other legal medications banned from the food chain.

Since the execution of the new EU directive in Canada as of July 31, 2010, which states that North American horses must be quarantined for various periods of time prior to slaughter for human consumption, the enforcement of these new regulations appears to be comparatively lax.

The flow of horses across the border from U.S. livestock auctions and killer buyers to Canada has not waned, nor has anything been reported on refusal of loads at the slaughter plants. Seemingly then, the EU continues to import drug-tainted horse meat.

In particular, Bute is administered on a regular basis to relieve pain and is inappropriately likened to the term “aspirin”. In fact, any animal that receives Bute is banned from ever entering the food chain as it is a known carcinogen thereby completely eliminating them for human consumption. Yet the slaughter of Thoroughbreds continues.

North America is not alone in their methodology; it is simply an easy place to start given the massive proportion of the global Thoroughbred population it comprises. Thoroughbred

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slaughter crosses no subjective boundaries; it is omnipresent and very disconcerting.

— AUSTRALIA

Like North America, Australia is not a “horse-eating” nation although the export of horse meat began sometime in the 1970’s. And just as in North America and other parts of the world there is a large demand for the meat of healthy, young animals with good quality muscling that will yield the best cuts and top dollar per pound.

“So where are these quality younger animals, rarely past middle years, coming from? It is difficult to get a breakdown of breeds/types sold for slaughter. The selling agents do not keep a record and the abattoirs are not forthcoming. But even in the absence of documented figures, the finger must be pointed firmly at the racing industry, which has a very high attrition rate of fine quality, well-muscled horses still in their prime often with no road open except to a horsemeat abattoir.

A significant statistic is that the peak slaughter years of the 80s also saw the highest number of Thoroughbred foals born, culminating in a record 23,697 in 1989. Apart from minor fluctuations, every year after that saw a steady decline to about 17,000 foals born in 2004. This fall was paralleled by a decline in horse meat production. It is logical to assume that the decreasing foal crop was heavily biased towards the lower end of the Thoroughbred market and therefore representative of those foals which, had they been born, would have been most likely to contribute to the horsemeat trade.” [8]

According to the Federal Government Department of Agriculture approximately 40,000 horses are slaughtered each year in Australia for human consumption and the pet food industry primarily for overseas markets, the largest of which is Japan but also include France, Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg. [9]

Moreover it is estimated that between 60-80% of the horses slaughtered in Australian abattoirs (for human consumption) and/or knackereries (for pet food and other uses) are young Thoroughbreds from the racing industry, most less than 7 years old, and many only 2 or 3 year old youngsters. [10]

As in other nations around the globe according to the RSPCA only a small percentage (~ 30%) of the typical foal population on an annual basis (17,000) will actually end up racing and even fewer will prove to be profitable or make it to top racing events (~ 1-3%). [11]

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And so in the Land of Oz the reality is unyielding; the horse is perceived as a commodity whose short shelf life is accommodated by slaughter and the horse meat trade – an expedient and profitable – option for disposal, inexcusable as it may be.

— UNITED KINGDOM

Even in Great Britain where modern horse racing found its roots with hundreds of years of unique heritage and patronage by aristocrats and royalty, slaughter is a harsh fact of life.

“For thousands of British thoroughbreds that are too old, too slow or not good enough jumpers, the end is brutal: a bullet through the temple or a metal bolt into the side of the brain. Then their carcasses are loaded on to freezer lorries and driven to France, where their flesh is sold as gourmet meat.

“This mass disposal of thoroughbreds is the side of the multi-billion-pound British racing industry that is rarely mentioned and even more rarely seen. It is not illegal. . . Most of the animals, which could live on average more than 30 years, are killed before their fifth birthday.” [12]

2010 figures released from the government indicate that the total number of horses slaughtered for meat in England, Scotland and Wales rose to 7,933 representing a 50% increase on the average number slaughtered in previous years. [13] Of the increase in number over half are known to be Thoroughbreds from the racing industry as a result of the explosion in foal crops over time.

This is widely believed to be the driving force in the slaughter of horses.

The industry produces approximately 5,000 foals on an annual basis (~5600 in 2009), while 4,000 - 5,000 racehorses are retired each year comprised primarily of young Thoroughbreds that have not made the grade. [14] [15] And so it seems then that every racing nation operates on this “equilibrium equation” – foal crop per year equals attrition rate – how practical to serve both the racing and slaughter industry.

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“There has always been a mystery about what happens to the 4,000 British racehorses that are 'retired' each year from the sport or the hundreds of young thoroughbreds not good enough to make the starting post. Even the sport's official body, the Horseracing Regulatory Authority, admitted to The Observer that 'racing doesn't really know what definitely happens to the horses when they stop racing.’ [16]

Moreover, research conducted by the Equine Fertility Unit found that 66% of thoroughbred foals were never entered for a race, and more than 80% were no longer in training after four years. [17]

Many of these perish in the slaughterhouses and knackeries, most before their 5th birthday. It is also well known that some Thoroughbreds are sent to European countries to be slaughtered and an unknown number are shot dead on British farms.

Equally as heinous, if not more so, is the fate of newborn foals.

During the years of growth and prosperity in the racing industry in the UK, the exorbitant stud fees charged to breeders to have their mare covered were handsomely rewarded with the profit that was made in foal sales. However with the devastating effects of the recession on the racing industry this economic formula no longer exists.

“And so unscrupulous and desperate breeders have found a grotesque and illegal solution: killing foals at birth - or aborting them - to avoid having to stump up the fees, which become payable only once the foal has lived for 48 hours.

'Breeders pay a nomination fee to have a mare covered by a stallion. Last year, that fee could have been £250,000, but now you would pay half that for the same stallion,' says a bloodstock agent.

'A lot of people are making sure the foals don't live 48 hours so they can avoid having to pay the fee. Why pay last year's extortionate prices when you won't cover your cost on selling the foal?' There are also reports of pregnant mares being 'given a shot' by the vet to induce abortion, again to avoid paying stallion fees. . . .'

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Foals which previously might have been sold for £40,000 each at auction now sell for just hundreds of pounds - if at all. The result is that many breeders are abandoning unsold foals at auction houses rather than taking them home.

Just before Christmas, Animal Aid received a tip-off from a well-known National Hunt jockey that 18 thoroughbred foals were destroyed after a horse auction at Goffs in Ireland (which supplies the British race circuit).” [18]

Heartbreaking, yes indeed.

— IRELAND

With the onset of the recession, Ireland – Europe’s largest producer of Thoroughbreds – and home to the giant Coolmore Stud, the largest horse breeding enterprise in the world, has come the sad reality that these horses, so costly to keep, are finding their way to the slaughterhouses. In fact the Thoroughbred slaughter industry has become a growth market over the past couple of years.

“In response to pressure from charities and industry bodies, the Department of Agriculture increased the number of licensed horse slaughter plants from just one factory in 2008 to five premises this year — B&F Meats Ltd in Kilkenny; Ballon Meats in Co Carlow; Shannonside Foods Ltd in Co Kildare; Ashgrove Wholesale Ltd in Co Limerick; and Ossory Meats in Co Offaly.

“While statistics on the breed of horse slaughtered are not recorded by officials, the majority (60-80pc) are believed to be thoroughbreds.

“John Joe Fitzpatrick from Shannonside Foods in Straffan says 80pc of the 2,200 horses slaughtered at his purpose-built plant last year were thoroughbred and 60pc would have raced.

“The horses are sent for factory disposal for numerous reasons, including poor track performance, career-ending injuries, temperament issues, stable vices and lameness.

“It’s an economic decision for owners and the factory is the cheapest way to dispose of a horse,’ explains Mr Fitzpatrick.” [19]

In 2010, 9,790 horses were slaughtered of which 4,618 were Thoroughbreds. [20] In fact, in Ireland there is an eight-week wait for horses to be slaughtered, resulting in a growing number being shipped to the UK to be shot and then bled. [21]

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And as is no different with other countries it is over breeding that is the culprit and the lack of owner accountability that is driving the mass slaughter. The ISPCA has called for better regulation across the industry but the main problem lies with the inability to control the number of horses bred and whether or not anything to this effect can be introduced to thwart this incessant over breeding from recurring again. [22]

As a campaigner for new laws governing the sport of horse racing in the UK states:

“The slaughterhouses are not doing anything wrong: they are simply clearing up the mess left over by the racing industry.” [23]

Charming.

— JAPAN

In a country where more money is bet on horse racing than anywhere else in the world, horse meat is consumed by humans and also sold as dog food. Horse meat is a staple in Japanese cuisine, particularly eaten raw, in which form it is called sakura (cherry blossom) because of the distinct pink color. [24]

Along with Japan’s own supply of Thoroughbreds, hundreds of race horses are sold each year from the US to breeding farms in Japan where 90% of all horses end up at the slaughterhouse. [25]

“As many as 20,000 horses were slaughtered in Japan in 2008, partly because of overbreeding of thoroughbreds in the U.S., where racehorses are exploited as disposable commodities. Tens of thousands of foals are produced each year for the greedy racing industry, but there is no plan for what to do with them when their racing days are over.” [26]

As countless people will recall, it was in a Japanese slaughterhouse where 1986 Kentucky Derby winner Ferdinand met his fateful end in 2002 after his breeding days were over.

To this end two more Kentucky Derby champions – Charismatic (1999) and War Emblem (2002) – still stand at stud at Japanese breeding farms and some day too may end up at the slaughterhouse when their usefulness is deemed to be at an end. Sadly retired race horses in Japan all too often meet their demise in the slaughter house given that land is scarce along with the insatiable Japanese appetite for horse meat.

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On a more positive note, Michael Blowen, owner and founder of Old Friends, a Kentucky facility for retired Thoroughbreds has, over the years, developed a good working relationship with many of the Japanese breeding farms which has afforded the opportunity of housing many of the retired US Horses at the facility. [27]

In fact, both War Emblem and Charismatic are on his list of those he would like to see retired to Old Friends.

Nevertheless, not all US Thoroughbreds are that fortunate and many make their way to the sushi bars and dining establishments of Japanese culture.

All Around the World

It is not only the racing nations referenced above that contribute to the thriving horse meat industry.

In many other countries of the world this sordid practice takes place with equally dismal numbers of Thoroughbreds at risk of the captive bolt, bullet, puntilla knife or other horrific and inhumane means.

Unfortunately without documentation of the types of horses that enter the slaughter pipeline it is difficult, if not impossible, to say with conviction how many of these are in fact cast-offs from the racing industry. Even those numbers for NA, the UK, Australia, Ireland and Japan are merely estimates.

Any country that races horses (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Uruguay, etc.) will undeniably slaughter a certain percentage of their Thoroughbreds or otherwise ship them elsewhere to have the deed performed for them. The lucrative horse meat trade is a global enterprise.

What is important is not where they are slaughtered, but rather that they are slaughtered, subjected to this barbaric practice as a result of over breeding in pursuit of power and profit at the hands of the unscrupulous.

[1] www.equinewelfarealliance.org/uploads/Slaughter_Statistics.pdf

[2] <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-228>

[3] <http://www.thestar.com/Sports/HorseRacing/article/420982>;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/01/sports/othersports/01rhoden.html>

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- [4] <http://www.jockeyclub.com/factbook.asp?section=2>
- [5] www.thankingthemonkey.com/docs/RunningforTheirLives.pdf
- [6] <http://www.respect4horses.com/truth.html>
- [7] <http://tuesdayshorse.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/milk-of-death-the-dark-side-of-the-nurse-mare-industry/>
- [8] <http://www.optimail.com.au/berrime/slaughter.htm>
- [9] http://www.eques.com.au/FEB-08/horse_slaughter_in_australia.htm
- [10] <http://www.optimail.com.au/berrime/slaughter.htm>
- [11] <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/australian-racehorses-for-dinner/2008/02/02/1201801095371.html>; <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/2737618.html>
- [12] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/01/horseracing.sport>
- [13] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/06/racehorse-slaughter-animal-welfare>
- [14] http://www.chai-online.org/en/compassion/entertainment_racing_slaughter.htm
- [15] <http://www.jockeyclub.com/factbook.asp?section=17>
- [16] http://www.chai-online.org/en/compassion/entertainment_racing_slaughter.htm
- [17] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/01/horseracing.sport>
- [18] <http://www.all-creatures.org/articles/ar-why.html>
- [19] <https://tuesdayshorse.wordpress.com/2011/03/17/from-the-3-10-at-leopardstown-to-a-meat-market-in-milan/>
- [20] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12682680>
- [21] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/06/racehorse-slaughter-animal-welfare>
- [22] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12682680>
- [23] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/01/horseracing.sport>
- [24] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_meat
- [25] <https://secure.peta.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2103>
- [26] Ibid.
- [27] <http://www.horsetalk.co.nz/news/2009/06/047.shtml>

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Part 5: Darkness At The End Of The Pipeline

CLEARLY the focal point of the matter regardless of the global racing jurisdiction is the critical overpopulation of horses as a direct consequence of over breeding coupled with the fact that few in the industry are willing to be accountable for their charges.

There is no question that racing is infused with money but sadly that money is not directed toward the welfare of the horse once their racing careers end, where “end” denotes a mere fraction of their typical life span.

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With the evolution of horse racing to the gainful global financial empires that currently exist, for many if not most in the business, slaughter is regarded as a normal “transaction” and part of the day-to-day workflow – a “necessary evil” where the horse is dealt with as a disposable commodity.

So it seems that is the message horse racing conveys with their "turning a blind eye" or "blinkered" approach. If not, then why does it continue?

It does not help the situation when individuals such as Alex Waldrop, president and chief executive of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA) in NA, insist that overbreeding is not to blame for the slaughter element of the racing industry.

Alex Waldrop, president and chief executive of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, rejected that overbreeding was to blame but acknowledged that slaughter was an issue. “The prices that are being paid by foreign entities who want horse meat is what’s driving slaughter, not the oversupply of horses,” Waldrop said. [1]

This is an archetypal statement of denial from pro-horse slaughter individuals and organizations in NA. Waldrop’s statement lacks principle and logical thought. If there is no overbreeding then why are there over 130,000 US horses that annually cross the Mexican and Canadian borders for slaughter as well-documented by said country? Pure nonsense.

The truth is that because slaughter exists the market for horse meat facilitates corruption within the industry and at the end of the day promotes overbreeding, in-breeding and unwarranted drug use. Where a demand for horse meat exists, the supply will follow. In basic terms, it is simply too convenient. All for what?

“Slaughter represents less than 3 cents for every \$100 of revenue in the horse industry. It has nothing to do with the health of the horse industry.” [2]

It is time for breeders and owners to take the reins of responsibility for the athletes that they mass produce at alarming levels.

These horses are not livestock and have had intimate human contact since they day they were born – they are living, breathing companions with unique personalities, not commodities like metals or petroleum products for example. At least that is what their function on this earth was intended be.

Time and again, those whose duty it is to ensure a safe and comfortable retirement shirk their

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responsibilities. As much as there are wonderful and caring retirement charities that strive to accommodate the masses, these compassionate individuals who work relentlessly and rely on donations from the public cannot provide for all of the cast-offs from this hardhearted industry, regardless of the locale – it is a global problem of mass proportions.

The pro-slaughter industry prevails with futility and rhetoric. Obviously, the vast majority of breeders and owners in the horse racing industry are part of this interest group. They simply do not want to administer any pro-horse initiatives nor do they want to be responsible. The callousness and cruelty cast upon one of God's most splendid creatures serving us diligently since the beginning of time is unthinkable.

As an example of the indifference that exists, in May of 2011, PETA called on the Jockey Club (NA) to inaugurate a new Thoroughbred retirement fund.

“People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has come up with a plan—the Thoroughbred 360 Lifecycle Retirement Fund—to jumpstart this effort. This proposal would require a mandatory \$360 retirement fee with every foal registration, a \$360 fee for every transfer of ownership, and a \$360 fee for each stallion and broodmare registration.

This is affordable for thoroughbred owners and would generate more than \$20 million toward retirement. It wouldn't solve all the problems—clearly the fund would have to be used wisely. This would require proper planning and administration. But without a substantial sum, nothing will be done. Thoroughbreds will continue to be trucked across our borders to their deaths by the tens of thousands.” [3]

Regardless of what PETA may stand for in many people's minds, it is nonetheless a valid and feasible proposition from both a humane and ethical perspective. Unfortunately the response has been anything but enthusiastic.

In response to PETA's proposal, the Jockey Club issued a statement:

“We continually explore and review programs and initiatives that could potentially enhance the welfare of retired thoroughbreds, but it is not the role of the Jockey Club to mandate specific courses of action for owners when it comes to making contribution decisions for retraining and retirement programs.” [4]

Acceptable? Not in the least. In fact, the Jockey Club's Retirement “Checkoff Program” which is a voluntary donation based on submission of registration papers generated only \$43,000 from 30,000 foal registrations in 2010 amounting to a meager \$1.44 per horse. [5]

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No one seems to care.

“The racing industry needs to deal with this life and death issue. Thoroughbred retirement is a racing industry obligation, not a voluntary donation.” [6]

Other initiatives such as “zero-tolerance” policies at racetracks have also been implemented and while all good and well intentioned, have not as a rule been totally successful.

Much of the problem revolves around documentation, implementation and credibility along with adequate enforcement. But isn't this really an excuse rather than a solution? How difficult is it to create a registered database with the introduction of mandatory paperwork that must change hands when a horse leaves the track.

As Anne Russek, a Virginia horsewoman involved in Thoroughbred retirement points out:

“We have all this information at our fingertips and choose not to use it,” Russek said. “Without fail it’s nothing but lip service from the higher-ups. A lot has been done over the years, but my take on it is the racing industry has more addressed it from a public-relations aspect rather than figuring out how to solve the problem.” [7]

In the meantime, racetracks without the proper initiatives in place and without the support of necessary sources that can provide alternatives to slaughter for retiring Thoroughbreds the consequences are grim and may add even more hardship to an already dire situation.

A guest commentary by Alex Brown (www.alexbrownracing.com) lends insight to the unintended consequences of zero tolerance policies for horse slaughter at many North American tracks that have adopted these well-intended but poorly managed strategies.

“So what happens to the horses at the racetracks with zero-tolerance slaughter policies? Racehorses that were going to public kill auctions?”

“A policy of zero tolerance for slaughter simply sends some of these horses ‘underground.’ Rather than go to a public auction like New Holland, where they can be seen by private buyers and horse rescues, they go directly to kill buyer feedlots and kill pens. Rescues that once had access to these feedlots and kill pens will no longer be provided access.

“Fewer racehorses may enter the slaughter pipeline, but more may ultimately be slaughtered.” [8]

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Obviously, it is long past time the racing industry remedy the disgrace this sport has become – the “Sport of Bloodshed”, certainly not of the gallant Bloodstock that grace its runways and instill awe and inspiration in its fans. Change is needed.

There is more than ample money in this industry to create the necessary retirement facilities to accommodate every horse that finishes their career whether they be a celebrated or average athlete.

Breeders, owners and trainers must be held accountable and provide for a safe and humane alternative to slaughter.

For the most part, volunteer organizations working tirelessly out of the goodness of their hearts, run on shoestring budgets with nominal manpower, and have little political authority compared to the pro-slaughter groups who dominate with wealthy influential lobbyists in their mission to defend the current state of affairs.

Given that the horse is entrenched in the evolution of human civilization and that without their loyalty, endurance and bravery in times of battle, is it not deserving to give them a modicum of reverence and appreciation for their ever-present value both in work and play?

Apparently not according to the racing industry — exploited for profit even in death.

“What he liked about horse racing was the minimal investment and the high returns. He didn’t mind horses at all; they were easy on the eyes and exciting to watch.

The horses industry in general was a zero-waste proposition: this was one animal you could take from birth, exploit all its qualities – speed, strength, tractability – through breeding, racing, eventing, calèche or companion service, and then profit from its flesh when it had outlived its usefulness.

You had to respect the horse. He was more than a beast of burden. He was a full service animal from birth to barbeque — no part of him wasted, no quality left unmined.” [9]

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/01/sports/othersports/01rhoden.html>

[2] <http://stablewomangazette.com/blogs/equine-welfare-alliance/the-high-price-of-horse-slaughter>

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[3] <http://peoplefortheethicaltreatmentofanimals.wordpress.com/>

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/21/sports/racing-industry-should-care-for-its-own.html>

[5] *Ibid.* at [3]

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] <http://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/57850/missing-horses-where-lies-responsibility#ixzz1QzH719xG>

[8] <http://tuesdayshorse.wordpress.com/2008/08/05/dark-side-of-zero-tolerance-by-racetracks-on-horse-slaughter/>

[9] D'Errico, Cynthia; *Ground Manners, A Novel*; p. 138; Xlibris; 13 January 2011.

THE END.