

## Full length version of articles abbreviated in TCFA Newsletter print edition.

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### **HSUS Sues USDA, But Also Gets Blasted In Capitol Hill Hearings**

This week, HSUS filed a lawsuit against USDA seeking the elimination of any exceptions to the ban on processing of non-ambulatory cattle. But the animal rights organization also took some heat in Congressional hearings for allowing animal abuse to potentially continue at a California meatpacking plant for months while the organization took the time to edit the video that led to the recent recall of 143 million pounds of meat products. And ultimately, there were suggestions that an HSUS executive might have committed perjury during his Capitol Hill testimony.

Food safety was the focus of Thursday's U.S. Senate Appropriations agriculture subcommittee hearing and a hearing held Tuesday by the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. But both hearings also allowed some Members of Congress and hearing witnesses to castigate HSUS for making the development of its video a priority instead of immediately reporting the abuses its undercover operative witnessed at Hallmark/Westland.

At the House subcommittee hearing, Dr. Michael Greger, an HSUS executive, responded to criticism by saying the San Bernardino District Attorney's Office asked HSUS to hold off on releasing the tape until prosecutors could complete their own investigation. However, subcommittee members responded that HSUS could have alerted USDA privately.

On Friday, the nonprofit Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF), a food issues watchdog group, asked the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee to review Dr. Greger's testimony and investigate whether he committed perjury. CCF made the request after the *Riverside Press-Enterprise* reported that the D.A.'s office denies asking HSUS to refrain from releasing information about Hallmark/Westland. The newspaper also reported that HSUS President Wayne Pacelle backed off Greger's statement by saying that he was uncertain if prosecutors specifically asked to keep the video out of public view.

### **Call For Complete Ban**

As for the call by HSUS and some Members of Congress for a complete ban on non-ambulatory animals, U.S. Ag Secretary Ed Schafer told the Senate subcommittee that he did not agree. "I do believe there are cases where downer animals can be approved by the veterinarian and put into the food supply," Schafer said, according to the *Washington Post*.

Schafer also said he believes the current rules on processing plants are adequate, even though the rules were obviously broken in the Hallmark/Westland case. But he said that USDA is taking interim steps such as more random inspections of plants and more frequent unannounced audits of facilities that provide meat for federal school lunch programs.

Late Friday, FSIS issued a notice on humane handling activities and documentation in livestock processing establishments. TCFA staff will review the document, and we'll have more information in next week's *TCFA Newsletter*. The notice is available <http://www.tcfa.org/Newsletter/FSISnotice02-29-08.pdf>.

Meanwhile, on Friday the *Wall Street Journal* reported that USDA has placed three employees – two agency supervisors and one inspector – on paid leave of absence as the investigation of the Hallmark/Westland case continues.

Also this week, American Meat Institute President J. Patrick Boyle called upon the industry to enroll all cattle producers and all dairy farmers in industry-developed quality assurance programs. He added that those programs should be subjected to random third-party audits.

## **Illinois Horse Law Challenged**

An Illinois law that closed a state horse processing plant and the federal appeals court decision upholding the law, have effectively exempted 40,000 to 60,000 horses from humane processing. That is a key reason why the U.S. Supreme Court should hear the appeal of the decision by the plant, Cavel International, Inc., according to a friend of the court brief filed by Livestock Marketing Association.

The brief says that when the Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit upheld the Illinois law that closed the DeKalb, Ill., plant last year, it “failed to address the adverse impact” of the law. As a result, “tens of thousands of horses...will now die of neglect or be killed using procedures which are outside the protection accorded by the Humane Slaughter Act.”

TCFA helped fund the preparation and filing of the brief, along with NCBA, KLA and TSCRA.

## **Cattle Imports From Canada**

Mexico’s agriculture ministry has announced plans for a partial lifting of the ban on live imports of Canadian beef and dairy calves. Beginning next month, Mexico will permit females younger than 30 months of age to enter as long as they come from herds where no instances of BSE have been detected, according to *Meatingplace.com*.

Mexican authorities say the Canadian cattle will be allowed to pass through U.S. territory under a protocol the three nations signed in January.

However, Mexico still prohibits importation of beef cattle breeding stock from the U.S. TCFA continues to encourage USDA to seek elimination of that barrier.

Meanwhile, as Mexico continues to buy more beef from beyond its borders, U.S. exports to that country have increased. The Association of Mexican Cattle-Rearers says Mexico’s purchases of foreign beef rose 5.2% to 370,569.6 metric tons last year. U.S. beef shipments dominated the market at 306,703.24 metric tons, a 3.86% increase over the previous year.

## **NCBA President Hopeful On Korea**

NCBA President Andy Groseta was encouraged by what he learned during a trip to witness the inauguration of South Korean President Lee Myung-bak this week. Groseta, who was part of a delegation led by Secretary of State Rice, said, “I truly believe we will soon be resuming beef trade with Korea. Ultimately, we’ll be able to enhance this trading relationship further with the U.S.-Korea trade agreement.

Lee is scheduled to visit the U.S. in April, and Korean media accounts indicate that he wants to resolve issues on beef trade before coming over.

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**Proposed Changes To The Clean Water Act (CWA)** under consideration by Congress are strongly opposed by the public, according to poll results announced by The Western Business Roundtable. H.R. 2421 and S. 1870 would unnecessarily expand the jurisdiction of the CWA to drainage ditches and streams that are dry during most of the year. A survey conducted by Public Opinion Strategies shows 63% of respondents opposed the proposed changes. Of that 63%, 47% strongly oppose any changes giving the federal government veto power over state and local governments when it comes to local land and water-use decisions.