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Attention News Editors:

CFIA Confronted on Breaking Own Rules as Inhumanity and Dangers of Horse Slaughter Industry Probed

OTTAWA, June 7 /CNW/ - The Canadian Horse Defence Coalition (CHDC) today calls for a thorough performance review of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, while questioning their management role in the monitoring and enforcement of equine slaughterhouses. Serious animal welfare concerns and potential dangers of horsemeat consumption will be addressed.

"It's troubling that the CFIA promised changes in slaughter practices after a 2008 investigation at Natural Valley Farms in Neudorf, Saskatchewan," states Alex Atamanenko, MP-NDP Agriculture Critic, "yet two years later, we hear that CFIA inspectors were instructed to break their own rules and not be present when firearms were being used to stun horses. Since 2007 there has been no oversight in the stunning areas of equine slaughter plants."

Veterinarian Dr. Debi Zimmermann concurs. "Recent undercover footage at two additional slaughterhouses shows prolonged animal suffering. These actions violate both accepted humane practices as well the CFIA's own regulations. In light of these serious breaches of industry regulations by the CFIA, we need to revisit the auditing process, as well as ensure that actions be taken to enforce regulations, with strict penalties imposed for inflicting cruelty on animals." Dr. Zimmermann also believes that the question as to whether or not horses can be slaughtered humanely deserves consideration.

"It is unacceptable that the Canadian government turned a blind eye to the suffering of horses in slaughter plants," adds Nikolas Gour, campaigner for Humane Society International / Canada. "Canadian investigations clearly demonstrate that horse slaughter is inherently inhumane. The Canadian government must act now to put an end to this cruelty."

Yet animal welfare is not the only concern. "Drugs like phenylbutazone are routinely given to horses for relief of pain and inflammation," states Dr. Ray Kellosalmi, M.D. "Bute is a proven carcinogen which would mean that we are, in fact, guilty of potentially poisoning consumers."

MP Alex Atamanenko, Dr. Zimmermann, and Dr. Kellosalmi will be speaking in the Press Gallery (Charles Lynch Room) beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 8, 2010. Mr. Gour will be available to answer questions for French media, and representatives from CHDC will also be in attendance.

For further information: please phone (204) 296-1375, www.defendhorsescanada.org