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ATAMANENKO MOVES TO BAN HORSE MEAT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

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OTTAWA – New Democrat Agriculture Critic, Alex Atamanenko (BC southern Interior) tabled a Private Members Bill (C-544) yesterday that would effectively shut down the slaughtering of horses for human consumption in Canada.

“The fact is that drugs which are prohibited for use during the life of any animals destined for the human food supply are routinely being administered to horses,” said Atamanenko. “It is irresponsible for Canada to allow the sale of meat from horses as a food item when they have never been raised in accordance with the food safety practices required for all other animals.”

Atamanenko points to the inexpensive, easily available and widely used anti-inflammatory drug, phenylbutazone (bute), as one example of what is quite likely to be prevalent in horsemeat. Bute is a known carcinogen and its use is illegal in any animal that enters the food supply.

“It is more likely than not that the vast majority of horses will have been administered bute, or ‘horse’s aspirin’ as it is commonly called,” said Atamanenko.

According to Atamanenko, at least fifty per cent of the horses being slaughtered in Canada are imported from the US where horse slaughter has been banned. The meat is then sold to markets in Europe. There are no regulations in the US to prevent horse owners from administering banned substances because horses are not regarded or treated as food-producing animals.

Under pressure from the European Union (EU), Canada is set to introduce a new ‘equine passport’ system to track the health history and medical treatments of horses arriving at slaughterhouses, including those from the States.

Atamanenko believes that it will be impossible for CFIA to verify data in these passports and expects to see a high incidence of inaccurate records.

“Many in the US believe it should be our job to verify information from US horses since Canada is the only one slaughtering them for human consumption,” concluded the Atamanenko. “It’s a stretch to think that information on hundreds of thousands of unwanted horses that were never raised to be food, will be complete or accurate.”

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