



THE STOUFFER REPORT

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Capitol Building, Room 332
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We Need to Take Care of Our Horses

Once upon a time, horses carried the workload on rural Missouri farms. Today's new technology allows Missouri farmers, like the hard workers in my district, to feed the world much more efficiently.

Modern farming practices can make us forget the techniques of the past, including how important horses are to the history of farming.

And they're still important.

Horses have transitioned from farm implement to an important part of family activities. We have domesticated these animals for rodeos, races, showing, jumping and the list goes on. Even though they have been domesticated, horses still represent agriculture.

Unfortunately, some folks have lost sight of this connection and have leaned on do-gooder legislators who do not understand the industry to make decisions for animals' "well-being" without realizing the consequences. Proponents of horse slaughter bans argue for humane treatment of horses. For the most part, there is no one more interested in treating animals well than the animal owners themselves. Take farmers and ranchers for example. Providing necessities for livestock and horses is their main priority and doing so – raising animals in a safe and nurturing environment – is even good for their bottom line. Of course, as with any industry, there are bad actors who should be punished according to the laws of the land.

Many folks in our area ask why the support of humane treatment of horses is coming from groups outside of agriculture such as the Humane Society of the United States. Two years after the ban was passed, several unintended consequences are now harming the equine industry.

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The American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA) reports approximately 100,000 horses become unwanted each year. Many horses become abandoned nuisances for landowners and a threat to themselves and other livestock. The AVMA also says this has caused a 312% increase in horses exported to Mexico. Equine and vet sources say the horses are then

slaughtered without care for humane treatment. The horses not slaughtered in Mexico, are turned loose and die from attacks in the wild and starvation. These standards are lower than the humane practices that have now been banned in the U.S.

But horse owners can't afford to take care of horses once they are no longer viable animals and need to be put down. According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners, euthanasia by a vet, plus the costs of carcass disposal will add up to \$400.

Many states ban the burying of horses due to pollution concerns, but with quality horses in local markets in rural Missouri bringing less than the costs of the fuel to get them there, farmers and ranchers and the livestock they tend to are put in a squeeze. Federal legislators and states throughout the Union should wake up to some common sense. Often, the folks who speak the loudest about caring for animals know the least about how to do it effectively. In fact, PETA's president once wished publicly all livestock in the U.S. would contract hoof and mouth disease.

Sen. Stouffer represents Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Clay, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, and Saline Counties.

If you have questions about this or any other matter, you can reach Sen. Stouffer at (573) 751-1507 or bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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