

Promoting slaughtering of horses and consumption of horse meat

- *Ethical horse keeping and meat production*

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INTRODUCTION



- Horse sector and **number of horses are increasing** – should we be happy with it?
- However, the useful life of the horse is limited - *what happens then?*
- There will be the time when horse owners have to part with their horses for some reason (old age, severe medical illness/injury, handling problems, poor economy)
- The end of the horse's life is important and **the way to the end**, as well

- How to get rid of the horse ethically and ecologically, i.e. by an acceptable way?
- The alternatives are slaughtering or euthanasia at home stable/horse clinic
- When putting down with the latter way, the problem is what to do with the dead body
- The alternatives are *burial (where allowed), cremation, rendering, destruction* – all are expensive

- But are these ways acceptable by the society; are they *sustainable, ecological, economical and ethic*?
- Further, high costs may lead to abandoning of horses – there are lot of abandoned horses e.g. in UK and Ireland – *this is a big welfare question*
- In many areas there are limited alternative options for dealing with unwanted horses

- Appr. 5% of the population size is put down yearly; this means that in Europe 300 000 athletic and hobby horses are dead every year
- Of those about 20 to 30 % are slaughtered in their home countries
- The rest are transported to other countries or the bodies are destroyed



WHY SLAUGHTERING?

- It is ethical, economical and sustainable from the point of view of animal welfare and environment
- Human consumption is economic and ethical way to utilize the meat – other alternatives are waste of food
- The ecological foot print of horse meat is small
- It is economical to the horse owner

WHY DOMESTIC SLAUGHTERING?

- In many countries there is **increasing demand** of horse meat from customers
- However, the domestic supply of horses for slaughter is small; *this leads to import of horse meat* – people prefer domestic meat
- Transportations of the animals are much shorter – long transports through Europe are a well known problem

- Welfare during transportations and in slaughter facilities can be properly controlled
- Horses can utilize local land areas as feed that are not utilized by other animals – positive impact on biodiversity



EXAMPLE FROM U.S

- **U.S banned horse slaughtering** in 2007
- After that many animal welfare problems arose; horse owners have fewer options for getting rid of horses they longer want: high costs of feeding, caring, veterinary/medication
 - ➡ **many horses are abandoned**
- Affects negatively prices of lower-to-medium priced horses (8 to 21 %)
- Economical downturn same time

- The horse meat from Canada and Mexico are born and raised in the U.S; 140 000 live horses are exported to these countries each year from the U.S
- The long transportations (to slaughterhouses or feedlots) of live animals is a big ethical and animal welfare question
- Several states in U.S are seeking to reopen horse slaughter facilities

ARE PEOPLE EATING HORSE MEAT?

- Horse has had an iconic role; its former importance as a work and transportation animal, “war hero”; today value as racing, recreation or show animal
- For many horses are “companion animals”
- However, the horse is a ***production/farm animal, a part of food chain***, and working animal

- There are some countries/cultures, e.g. UK and Ireland where people do not eat horse meat
- In many countries this is based on Christian traditions; the pope Gregorius III banned horse meat eating in 732
- From the 15th century eating horse meat has been a tabu in Europe; this changed in late 1800's because of lack of food and animal welfare reasons

- Consumers in some countries or areas traditionally have a strong preference for horse meat (e.g. in Italy)



“Horse meat scandal”



- Gave possibilities to show the positive aspects of horse meat and its human consumption
- Increased the demand of horse meat in some countries (e.g. Finland, Sweden)
- Increased the interest in domestic horse meat
- Some meat houses stopped to use horse meat (only minimal part in their products)

HORSE SLAUGHTERING AND HUMAN CONSUMPTION IN EU

- Each year over 200 000 horses are slaughtered for human consumption in the EU
- It is mainly low-priced horses that are more likely be bought for slaughter
- Nearly half of these horses are slaughtered in Italy
- The remainder are slaughtered primarily in Poland, Spain, France, Romania, Belgium, Germany

Horses slaughtered for meat production 2007

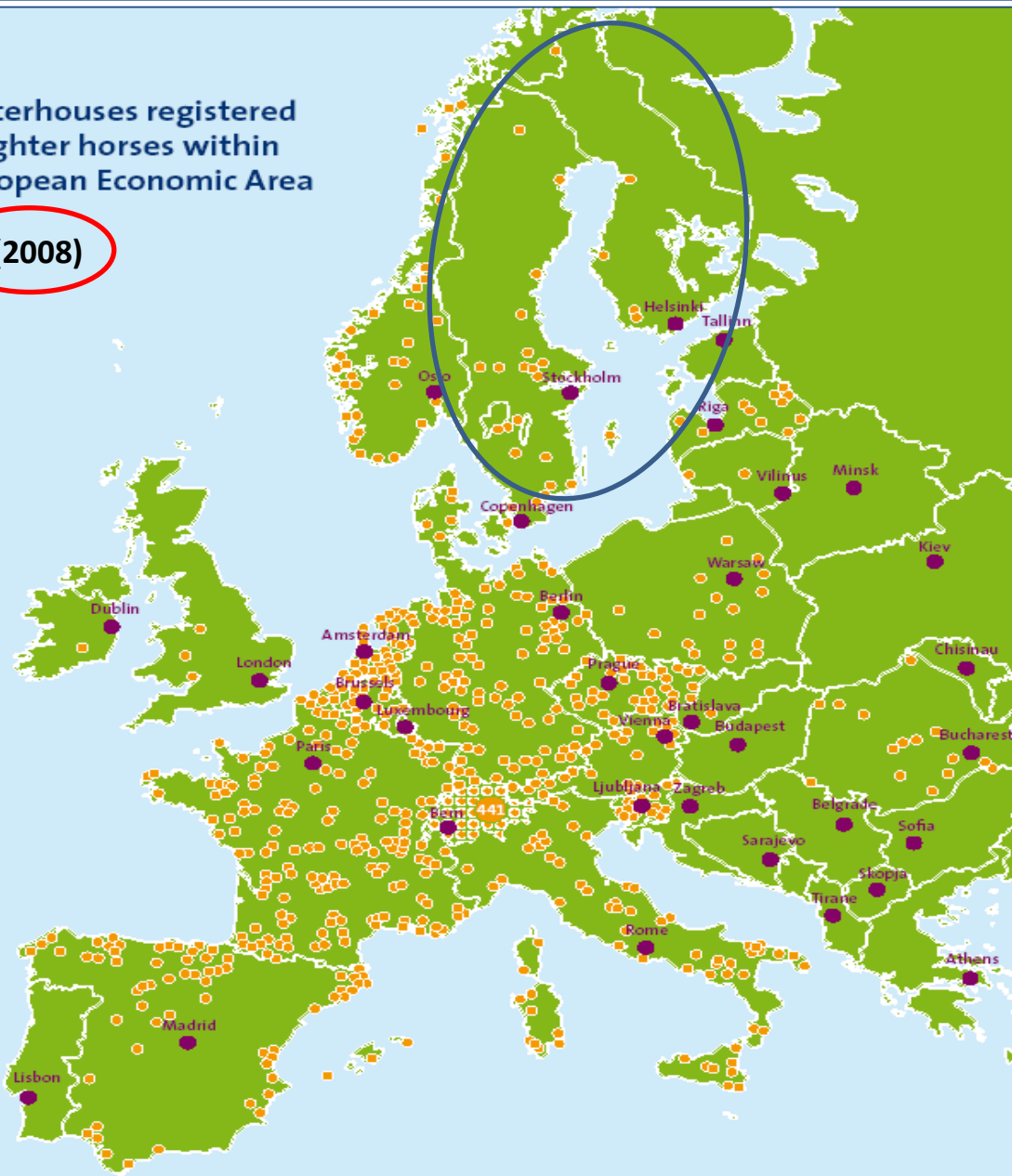
	%	1000 heads
Italy	46.6	99 970
Poland	18.4	39 608 (45 000)
Spain	12.2	26 172 (30 000 >60 000)
France	8.2	17 744
Belgium	4.7	10 149
Germany	4.5	9 704 (11 500)
Sweden	1.3	2 996
Netherlands	1.2	2 656
Other EU members	2.9	5 527

(Human Society International 2013)

- Due to the economic downturn number of slaughtered horses in Spain has doubled from year 2007
- Slower levels of horse slaughter are recorded in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg and other countries
- In the EU countries there are large number of slaughter houses registered to slaughter horses – in many countries they are spread quite equally
- In some countries the number of slaughtering facilities has increased

Slaughterhouses registered to slaughter horses within the European Economic Area

(2008)



- The largest horse meat consumer countries are Italy, France, Belgium; *consumption has decreased in many countries after 1970's*
- Poland and Spain (+ Romania) are main exporters of horses and horse meat in the EU; also Germany, Denmark and The Netherlands are exporting
- Italy, France and Belgium are the largest importers of horse meat and live horses; *Belgium being a major importer from outside the EU*

- Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay are the exporters of horse meat to the EU
- For example, over 50 000 live horses are imported to Italy to be slaughtered there; long transports are a problem also in Europe



PROJECTS PROMOTING HORSE SLAUGHTERING AND HUMAN CONSUMPTION

- To horse owners, slaughterhouses, meat industry and consumers
- Focus on animal welfare, economy of horse keeping, quality and safety of horse meat
- Increase of supplying of horses for slaughter and human consumption of domestic horse meat

- Two projects/campaigns in Finland (1998, 2009) and one in Sweden (2012-2013); collaboration of horse breeding and owner associations, producers' associations, ministry of agriculture
- In fact, the associations for animal welfare in Finland were established to promote human use of horse meat in 1901 (“first campaign”)

Conclusions of the projects:

- There are difficulties to get horses to be slaughtered
- Main problems are low price and sometimes long (expensive) transports
- All horses can not be slaughtered because of medication and insufficient medication recording
- Uneven supply for slaughter
- More expensive to handle than carcass of other species

- Horse has an important role in the feed chain
- People are interested in eating horse meat – the interest has increased during “the horse meat scandal” – *there should be more supply (both horses to slaughtering and meat in the shops, restaurants)*
- Customers want to buy domestic horse meat and horse meat products – not imported

- Human consumption of horse meat has economic and employment benefits to local communities (possibilities for small slaughter facilities)
- In addition, horse meat production may be important to protect old native heavy breeds (special products)



- More information is still needed re slaughter as an alternative to put down a horse
- *Proper use of horse passport, documentation of all medications and identification of the horse is the key factor to guarantee food safety and t confidence and growing demand of horse meat by meat industry and customers*

	Proteins g	Fat g	Energy kcal	Iron mg	Sodium mg
HORSE	22,6	2,6	108	4,8	44
Pig	16,2	26,6	311	1,8	63
Sheep	11,1	11,8	151	3,1	87
Calf	20,5	5,4	131	2,1	60
Chicken	19,9	9,6	166	0,7	83
Duck	18,1	17,2	227	2,5	38

Thank you!