
Public Safety Committee

HB 1025

Brief Description: Concerning the slaughter of horses and other equines for human consumption.

Sponsors: Representative Appleton.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that it is a class C felony to engage in certain activities related to the slaughter of horses for human consumption.
- Provides that it is a class C felony to possess or engage in specified activities related to the transfer of horse meat intended for human consumption.
- Repeals an existing statute prohibiting possession, transport, or sale of horse meat for a purpose other than human consumption.
- Removes horses and other equines from certain laws governing the disposal of dead animals.

Hearing Date: 2/4/19

Staff: Jenny Aronson (786-7290). Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Federal Law Regarding the Slaughter of Horses for Human Consumption.

Several bills have been introduced at the federal level to expressly prohibit the slaughter and export of horses for human consumption in the United States (U.S), but no such legislation has become law. However, U.S. States production of horsemeat for human consumption has been halted at a federal level through the elimination of certain funding from the federal budget. Facilities slaughtering animals for human consumption must be regulated and overseen by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspectors, and Congress eliminated funding for USDA inspections of horse slaughterhouses starting in 2006.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Since 2006, two annual federal budgets have authorized the use of funds for USDA inspections of horse slaughterhouses, but no funds were used for this purpose and no slaughterhouses were opened or operational. In 2014, and in each subsequent annual budget, Congress again passed the ban on funding of USDA inspections of horse slaughterhouses.

State and Local Regulation of the Slaughter of Horses for Human Consumption.

There is no state-level prohibition on the slaughter of horses for human consumption in Washington, and the consumption of horse meat by humans is legal in most states. At least one local jurisdiction in Washington has banned the slaughter of horses for meat.

Several states have passed laws banning and criminalizing the slaughter of horses for human consumption, resulting in the closure of the last remaining slaughterhouses in the country in 2007.

Washington Law Regulating Disposal of Dead Animals.

The chapter of the Revised Code of Washington governing disposal of dead animals provides for the licensing of rendering plants and independent collectors and establishes licensing standards for handling and disposal of the bodies of meat food animals. "Meat food animal" is defined to include cattle, horses, mules, asses, swine, sheep, and goats. A "rendering plant" is a place where the bodies of meat food animals are processed for the purpose of obtaining the hide, skin, grease residue, or any other by-product. An "independent collector" is any person who is equipped and licensed to transport the bodies of meat food animals or packing house refuse to a rendering plant.

As provided in the same chapter, it is unlawful for any person to transport, sell, offer to sell, or have on his or her premises horse meat for a purpose other than human consumption. This prohibition does not apply to carcasses slaughtered by a farmer for consumption on his or her own ranch, to carcasses in the possession of a licensed rendering plant or independent collector, or to canned horse meat meeting federal regulations.

Summary of Bill:

It is a class C felony for any person to:

- slaughter a horse if that person knows or should know that any of the meat from the slaughtered animal is intended to be used for human consumption;
- possess, purchase, barter, or sell privately; purchase, barter, or sell at retail; exhibit for barter or sale or give freely; or possess or transport with the intent to barter or sell, a horse if that person knows or should know that the horse or its meat will be used for human consumption; or
- transport a horse through or from Washington if that person knows or should know that it is intended for human consumption.

Each violation constitutes a separate offense. Furthermore, a separate violation is established for each involved horse.

It is also a class C felony to possess, purchase, barter, sell, exhibit, or transport with the intent to barter or sell, horse meat if that person knows or should know that the horse meat will be used for human consumption. These prohibitions apply to both private and retail transactions.

For purposes of these offenses, "horses" include all members of the equine family, including horses, ponies, donkeys, mules, hinnies, asses, and burros. "Horse meat" includes the flesh of any horse, including viscera, skin, hair, hide, hooves, and bones.

Local jurisdictions are not preempted or precluded from enacting or enforcing more stringent ordinances relating to the slaughter of horses and other equines for human consumption or to other aspects of equine animal welfare.

The definition of "meat food animal" in the chapter governing disposal of dead animals and licensure of rendering plants and independent collectors is modified to remove horses, mules, and asses. As a result, provisions covering disposal of dead animals under this chapter include only cattle, swine, sheep, and goats. The current law provision prohibiting the transport, sale, or offer to sell horse meat, or having horse meat on one's premises, for a purpose other than human consumption, is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.