

THE LOST HORSES

Facts for Congressional Briefing or Talking Points

1. Ethical Imperative: No horse is born to endure export, cruelty, and slaughter.

Horses are not livestock in the traditional sense—they are companions, working animals, therapy partners, and cultural symbols of freedom and the American West. Yet thousands are packed into crowded trailers each year, trucked across the border, and slaughtered under conditions that are often brutal and terrifying. The current system allows horses to suffer in long-distance transport with no food, water, or rest—followed by slaughter methods that frequently fail to render them unconscious before butchering. No animal should endure this, let alone one so integral to our history and identity.

2. Public Will: Americans overwhelmingly reject horse slaughter.

Polling consistently shows that over 80% of Americans oppose horse slaughter, including strong majorities across political affiliations and geographic regions. This is not a fringe issue—it's a mainstream, bipartisan concern. Americans do not eat horse meat, and the notion of slaughtering horses for human consumption runs counter to the country's values and culture. Congress should reflect the will of the people by passing the SAFE Act and ending this practice once and for all.

3. Health Risk: Exported horses often carry medications unsafe for human consumption.

Horses in the U.S.—whether former racehorses, ranch horses, or pets—are routinely given medications that are banned in food animals. These include phenylbutazone (bute) and other substances that are known carcinogens or pose serious health risks if ingested by humans. Because there is no tracking system for equine medical histories and no reliable residue testing at slaughter facilities, this creates a serious food safety hazard, particularly in export markets. Banning horse slaughter and export would help prevent toxic meat from entering the global food supply.

4. Legislative Fix: The SAFE Act enshrines a permanent federal ban beyond temporary measures.

Currently, the only thing preventing horse slaughter within the U.S. is an annual appropriations rider that prohibits USDA inspection funding for horse slaughter plants. But this is temporary and vulnerable to reversal during each budget cycle. The SAFE Act offers a permanent statutory solution, banning both slaughter and export for slaughter, and removing the ambiguity that's persisted for over a decade. It's time for Congress to replace a stopgap with a strong, lasting policy.

5. Broad Base: Bipartisan leadership and cosponsors are already on board.

The SAFE Act of 2025 (H.R. 1661/S. 775) is already backed by leaders from both parties. In the House, it is championed by Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL). In the Senate, it has been introduced by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM). As of mid-2025, the bill already has 100+ cosponsors, showing strong cross-aisle support. Backing this bill is a politically safe move that aligns with public opinion, ethical values, and long-standing advocacy by the equine welfare community.