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## Government to Study Unwanted Horse Issues

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The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has been tasked with examining how horse processing plant closures have affected equine welfare. The GAO is an independent, nonpartisan agency that provides Congress with objective, fact-based information intended to improve performance and accountability of federal agencies.

Commercial horse processing has not taken place in the United States since 2007 when state legislation shuttered the last two processing plants in Texas and Illinois. Congress has also denied funds for USDA horsemeat inspections. Legislation is currently pending that would ban the transport of horses to processing plants in Mexico and Canada.

The equine welfare study will investigate how horse processing plant closings:

- Have influenced the number of horses sold, exported, adopted or abandoned;
- Affected farm income and trade;
- The extent to which horses are slaughtered in the United States for any purpose;
- The slaughter ban's impact on state and local governments and animal protection organizations;
- How the USDA oversees the transport of horses for slaughter in Mexico and Canada;
- How the Departments of Agriculture and Interior work with state governments to identify hold and transport unwanted horses for foreign transport.

The U.S. Senate Appropriations' Committee ordered the study during its consideration of H.R. 2997, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010. The measure allocates funds for the USDA, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other related agencies.

The GAO report became part of the bill through a joint House and Senate conference committee agreement after its passage last summer. President Obama signed the bill into law on Oct. 21.

The report will be released in 2010, said GAO spokeswoman Lisa Shames.

**Readers are cautioned to seek the advice of a qualified veterinarian before proceeding with any diagnosis, treatment, or therapy.**



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