

“Chronic Lameness Under a Horse Slaughter Ban”

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You are a veterinarian in a rural community where the unemployment rate is significantly higher than the national average. You work solo treating horses and you have been called out to the Gorman Farm for the third time in 3 weeks. Their 25-year old mare, named Liberty Bell, has been suffering from chronic lameness issues that aren't getting better. You don't have anything new to offer by way of treatment, at least nothing that these owners could afford. Recently, they brought up the subject of euthanasia, knowing that Liberty's quality of life is never going to be what it used to be.

Although it is late summer and you are okay with the Gorman's bartering with sweet corn, tomatoes, potatoes, apples and melon, this only covers your trip fees and not the costs of any additional diagnostics or medications. (You have been out of school for 9 years and you are still paying off your school loans, so you cannot afford to do pro bono work until you pick up more clients and more income.)

Questions to consider and discuss:

- 1) What are some courses of action that you could recommend to the owners?
- 2) List all possible stakeholders and discuss what they might stand to “win” or “lose” with each of those courses of action.
- 3) How might this situation be different if there weren't a ban on horse slaughter in the United States?
- 4) What are some short-term and long-term impacts of the U.S. ban on horse slaughter?
- 5) What role has the veterinary profession had (or played) regarding the horse slaughter ban?
- 6) Given the situation in the USA today, what do you think the position of the veterinary profession should be regarding horse slaughter?

Information for Instructors Using “Chronic Lameness Under a Horse Slaughter Ban”

Ethical issues raised by this case include:

1. Is it wrong to kill horses for food?
2. What responsibilities do horse owners have with regard to planning for end-of-life issues?
3. What responsibilities do veterinarians have when the owners of horses cannot afford medically indicated treatments or other interventions?
4. What standards regarding horse slaughter should be adopted by professional organizations like the American Veterinary Medical Association and by state and federal governments?

Teaching objectives for the case can include:

1. This case would be particularly useful after students are exposed to background information on the history of horse slaughter in the United States via some of the resources listed below; and with students in veterinary medicine programs.
2. The case can be useful in conjunction with two of the lectures included in Module 1 of these materials:
 - a. Lecture 2: “Framework for Deliberation”—the listed questions can be used to model deliberative decision-making and to contrast it with debate-style argumentation.
 - b. Lecture 3: “Facilitating Moral Reasoning”—the listed questions can be used to elicit responses to some of the questions in Campbell’s Ethics Assessment Process.

Supplementary resources:

“Obama signs budget measure that withholds money for required federal inspections of slaughter process.” *USA Today*:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/01/17/horse-slaughter-blocked-by-federal-law/4604929/>

A Timeline of Horse Slaughter Legislation in the United States” from HorseChannel.com: <http://www.horsechannel.com/horse-resources/horse-slaughter-timeline.aspx> with links to articles that HorseChannel.com

If you have a more academic and comprehensive source to suggest on this topic, contact Gary Varner (g-varner@tamu.edu).