

## Horse Slaughter: The Truth By Ryan Lacey



Every little girl dreams of owning a horse. Horses possess a certain beauty, or perhaps, a certain power that can captivate a young girl's soul. From as far back as I can remember, horses were my fascination, my fascination that grew into a lifestyle and passion. I remember taking riding lessons, brushing down these magnificent creatures, even mucking out their stalls. At age ten, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to own my own horse. My parents had never owned horses before, and we were all very excited. At that point in my life, I did not fully understand horse slaughter. With every year that passed, as I became more involved in the horse industry, the more I learned.

No one ever seems to talk about horse slaughter. Sure, it does not actually take place in the United States, but the United States plays a huge role. Most commonly, horses are sold at auctions, bought by "kill buyers", are held at a "kill pen", and from there, are shipped to either Canada or Mexico for slaughter. Horses are trucked in cattle trucks for hours upon end without food or water, awaiting death. Many horses sustain injury on the journey due to poor travel conditions. Horses are then lined up one by one, moving down a chute, inching closer to their fate. Horses are shot one by one with a captive bolt pistol, are hung, cut, and bleed out. It is a

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gruesome, yet profitable practice. Many people have found that they can make money off buying horses and shipping them out of the country for slaughter and human consumption. Horses at auctions, even if they ride, will generally sell by the pound, much like cattle. Horses sell per pound much cheaper than cattle, and kill buyers can make a living off of these poor, unwanted creatures. Many people believe that kill buyers are simply practicing a necessary evil; making rid of the unwanted, sick, old, and unusable horses. I wish that were the case.

Kill buyers target the most profitable horses. Kill buyers go after the fattest and healthiest animals first. Why? Simple. Kill buyers go after horses that are healthy enough to make the trip to either Canada or Mexico, and the ones that will make the most profit. Kill buyers avoid animals that would be too weak or young to make the grueling trip out of the country. Kill buyers also target riding and companion horses. Why? Well, this part is not as simple, and many do not understand. Kill buyers have now found it profitable to market and sell riding and companion horses to “rescue organizations” or personal buyers. These horses are marketed as “Kill Buyer Owned”, and have a set date to ship for slaughter. This sends rescues and horse lovers alike frantic. Of course these horses are “saved” from the kill buyer, and given a second chance. But it all comes down to money. The kill buyer will only pay a few hundred dollars per head of horse at auction. The kill buyer will sell off some horses at two to three times what he paid, allowing himself to buy two or three more horses for slaughter. By saving one, you kill many more. By buying from a kill buyer, you not only are supporting him, but feeding the slaughter pipeline.

There is only one solution to this problem. Rescues and horse lovers alike need to intervene and break the cycle. We need to either outbid the kill buyer, or make it a priority to seek out “high risk” horses before they end up at auction, as well as educate horse owners

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about the truth behind horse slaughter. High risk horses would be any horse that is advertised at a low price, or one whose owner is in desperate need to sell them. I regularly attend auctions and have put up posts on craigslist explaining that I will take in unwanted horses. I myself have purchased six horses from a local auction, and have taken in five horses that were at high risk of going to auction. These horses each spent some length of time in my care, rehabilitating and brushing up on their riding skills. Each of these horses were rehomed as riding horses and given a true second chance. To this day, I have owned and resold more than twenty horses. I have been able to fund my cause by retraining and selling riding horses. I can only save so many, but I am reassured knowing that I did not kill anymore by saving the ones I did. At seventeen years old, I am proud to say that I have changed the lives of many horses. I realize that this is only the beginning, and that the rest of my life will be devoted to saving and protecting these magnificent creatures, and hoping that one day I don't have to.

As of today, our pastures are filled with eight of my best friends. From this journey, I have learnt not only about horses, but about respect, hard work, and perseverance.. Horses have truly taught me the importance of patience and equality. Horses love, live, and feel, just as we do. These animals deserve to be fought for. Every animal deserves to die feeling a compassionate human touch.

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**“Lenny”**- A horse I from auction and rehabilitated.



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**“Easy Peppy Dude”**- A horse I purchased from auction and rehabilitated.

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**“Montanna”**- A horse I purchased from auction and rehabilitated.

**Citation:** I wrote this essay based solely on my own knowledge and experiences. I did not use any outside resources. All images were taken by me of my own animals.