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Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
 ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 May 24, 2007

Printer Friendly Version

Gov. Blagojevich signs legislation banning the slaughter of horses in Illinois for human consumption

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed legislation that bans the slaughter of horses in Illinois for human consumption. House Bill 1711, sponsored by State Representative Robert S. Molaro (D-Chicago) and State Senator John Cullerton (D-Chicago), bans importing or exporting horsemeat if any horsemeat will be used for human consumption.

"It's past time to stop slaughtering horses in Illinois and sending their meat overseas. I'm proud to sign this law that finally puts an end to this practice," Gov. Blagojevich said.

The Governor announced his support for the legislation after hearing from advocates, including Bo Derek, actress and longtime activist for the protection of horses, in April. Violations of the new state law are punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a fine of \$1,500.

"People were selling horses not knowing that they were being used and treated like livestock and ended up on the slaughter room floor," said Sen. Cullerton. "This bill will ensure that using horses for the purpose of human consumption is illegal throughout the State of Illinois just as it is in 48 other states in the nation."

"I am grateful to my colleagues and the Governor for joining with me in ending this shameless slaughter of these

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beautiful animals for the sole purpose of ensuring fine dining in European restaurants," said Rep. Molaro.

"There is no domestic market for horsemeat and, therefore, no need for this practice to continue in Illinois," Agriculture Director Chuck Hartke said. "Meat from the slaughtered horses is being shipped overseas to places like Belgium, France and Japan."

Illinois is home to the sole remaining horse slaughterhouse in the United States, Cavel International in DeKalb. Two other horse slaughterhouses in the country, both in Texas, closed earlier this year after an appellate court rejected their appeals of a lower-court ruling that the plants were operating in violation of Texas state law.

"As both a horsewoman and a compassionate person, I applaud the resolve of the people of Illinois to end the cruel, bloody trade in horsemeat," said actress Bo Derek. "My family hails from the State of Illinois and I know they would be proud of the actions taken on behalf of our horses by Gov. Blagojevich, Rep. Molaro and Sen. Cullerton."

"With a stroke of his pen, Gov. Blagojevich has brought the brutal slaughter of horses in the United States to an end. Hereafter, may we only hear of horse slaughter recounted in history books as a sign of how we have progressed in our treatment of these majestic animals," said Chris Heyde, deputy legislative director for the Society for Animal Protective Legislation.

"On behalf of our national coalition that includes thousands of Illinois horse owners, we are deeply grateful to Gov. Blagojevich, Rep. Molaro, Sen. Cullerton, and all members of the Illinois General Assembly who have worked so hard to pass this essential legislation to protect horses from the cruel practice of horse slaughter," said Gail Vacca of Top of the Hill horse farm in Wilmington. "Illinois horse owners are proud today in the knowledge that our state legislature has set the bar in raising the standard for the humane treatment of our nation's horses."

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