

House of Commons
325 Confederation Bldg
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Tel.: (613) 996-8036
fax: (613) 943-0922
E-mail: atamaa@parl.gc.ca

Constituency
337 Columbia Ave.
Castlegar BC V1N 1G6
1 (800) 667-8393
Tel.: (250) 365-8792
Fax: (250) 365-8793
E-mail: atamaa1@parl.gc.ca



Alex Atamanenko

M.P. for BC Southern Interior
Député pour BC Sud-est

Chambre des communes
305, Éd. de la Confédération
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Tél.: (613) 996-8036
Télééc.: (613) 943-0922
Courriel: atamaa@parl.gc.ca

Circonscription
337, rue Columbia
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Tél.: (250) 365-8792
Télééc.: (250) 365-8793
Courriel: atamaa1@parl.gc.ca

November 07, 2011
Castlegar, BC

Mr. George Da Pont, President
Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa, ON K1A 0Y9

Dear Mr. Da Pont:

First of all I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate you upon your appointment as President of Canada's Food Inspection Agency. I'm sure you will find the challenges of heading up a department that plays such a significant role in the everyday lives of all Canadians, extremely rewarding.

There are a few concerns which I would like to bring to your attention in regards to the horse slaughter/horse meat industry that I believe need to be addressed in an urgent manner by your department. As you are no doubt aware, horsemeat from Canadian slaughterhouses is being exported to the EU with a small amount sold domestically, mainly in Quebec. Approximately half the horses are imported from the US where horse slaughtering facilities have been effectively shut down.

I believe there is a strong likelihood that a great deal of the horsemeat coming out of Canadian slaughterhouses is quite toxic for human consumption. It is hard to see how it could be otherwise since the horses that are being delivered into the slaughter pipeline, the vast majority of which are picked up by kill-buyers at auction houses throughout Canada and the US, are not being raised in accordance to the health and safety standards as all other food producing animals. There are undoubtedly a large percentage of them that will at some point in their lives have been administered horse medications that are banned for use even once in food animals.

I could use the example of phenylbutazone (bute) as just one of the commonly administered horse drugs which are banned for use in animals at any time if they are destined for the human food supply. I am taking the liberty of attaching for your information, an article from the Irish Veterinary Journal which highlights the fact that bute, or its metabolite, can cause aplastic anaemia in children if a child were to consume an animal-based product in even the minutest amount. It is because of this that the EU has implemented strong measures to ensure that bute does not enter the horse meat supply. One measure is that passports issued to horses over the age of six months are automatically stamped as ineligible for human consumption. No such segregation method exists for the Canadian horse slaughter industry.



According to a poll in online magazine "The Horse.com", article # 12956, October 24, 2008, by Megan Arszman, the question asked that was answered by 1350 readers was: "What do you use for pain management?" Bute was used by 85.33% of horseowners responding to the poll carried out by the magazine.

While I appreciate that your agency, after some pressure from the EU, is attempting to address this issue by requiring health histories on an Equine Identification Document, there are serious loopholes that render it wholly inadequate for ensuring toxic meat is not being sold to consumers in a failsafe manner. Since Canada and US have no safe levels of the commonly administered Bute it is clear that CFIA'S requirement to record medical treatments administered during the six-month period preceding slaughter is inadequate. This is especially true when we consider that bute is prohibited for use even once in a food animal's lifetime. There is to prevent the current owner of a horse that has changed hands many times over its lifetime, from reporting as required on the EID that 'to the best of my knowledge' prohibited drugs have never been administered.

Racehorses are routinely given drugs (with leg injuries being common)—including phenylbutazone, yet racehorses are commonly being slaughtered. By rights, with the new EU requirements, there should be few, if any, racehorses being presented for slaughter.. I would like to point you to a research study by Nicholas Dodman, Nicolas Blondeau, Ann M. Marini entitled *Association of phenylbutazone usage with horses bought for slaughter: A public health risk*, which appeared in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, which concluded that the tests being used were not sensitive enough to detect bute in the race horses used for the tests.

As you may already be aware, I have introduced a Private Members Bill (C-322), to prohibit the importation or exportation into Canada or between provinces of horses to slaughterhouses for human consumption. There is widespread support among the Canadian public for this bill which I hope will translate into action by your department. Horsemeat that comes from horses that have been bought up from all kinds of owners, selling for all kinds of reasons, from every nook and cranny across Canada and the US is clearly not a source of food that is fit for humans. This industry, by its very nature, casts an unnecessarily poor light on the integrity of the food safety system in our country.

Thank you for taking the time to hear of these concerns and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Alex Atchankov, MP
BC Southern Interior

Cc: Malcolm Allen, MP

Attachments

Gp/

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