



THE COALITION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RACEHORSES Inc.

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6 August 2021

Stella Kyriakides
European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

By email: stella.kyriakides@ec.europa.eu

Re: A new potential consumer health risk from the consumption of Australian horse meat

Dear Stella Kyriakides,

The reason for writing to you is it has come to our attention that it has been claimed that a consignment of horses from the Northern Territory, Australia were destined to be slaughtered for human consumption, but due to COVID restrictions were instead redirected to a knackery in Victoria and slaughtered there for pet food.

These horses had been grazing on a plant native to northern Australia, *Indigofera linnaei*. This plant contains indospicine, a toxin that causes severe liver damage, and while dogs are particularly susceptible to this toxin, it is unclear as to whether humans may also be negatively impacted. At this stage over sixty dogs have been affected by eating meat which Australian authorities appear to have traced back to these horses. To date, over twenty dogs have died, and many others will be left with lifelong health problems.

We know that many horses from northern Australia are slaughtered at the EU approved Meramist Abattoir in Caboolture, Queensland and their meat is exported to Switzerland and the EU for human consumption. There is the possibility that the meat of any horse from northern Australia slaughtered for human consumption has the potential to cause harm to consumers.

In this instance, the horses that appeared to have carried the toxin were slaughtered at the Maffra Knackery in Victoria. On July 29th 2021 the knackery made this comment on their Facebook page “we provided details of station bred horses we purchased from Northern Victoria which we now understand might have contained the toxin because they had crossed the Victorian border from interstate.”

Agriculture Victoria and PrimeSafe released this media statement on July 30th 2021 which may be of benefit to you:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/about/media-centre/media-releases/primesafe-and-agriculture-victoria-statement-indospicine-in-pet-meat-warning-to-dog-owners>

Also of benefit is a link to a study on the meat of slaughtered camels that had consumed the same plant and as such, the same toxin. The results of this study demonstrate a concern for human safety if the affected meat were to be consumed.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6162627/>

We believe that despite any regulations and testing that our export abattoir, Meramist, may have in place, the health of Europeans consuming Australian horse meat cannot be guaranteed. This is not only because of the ongoing issue of drugs in the systems of horses but also because of naturally occurring toxins in their meat. For this reason, and the already thoroughly documented breaches to EU animal welfare regulations at the abattoir, we again ask that you immediately cease importing horse meat from Australia.

Regards,
Elio Celotto
Campaign Director
Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses