

Your Letters

Horse Illustrated editors received multiple letters this month about articles in the magazine from the Connemara Pony to slaughter issues. Tell us what you think.

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I read the article "Far and Away" by Sharon Biggs in the August 2007 issue. I own a 13-year-old Connemara/Thoroughbred-cross mare, and she is quite the jumper. She is only about 15.1 hands high, yet has the ability of a Connemara, and the speed and stamina of a Thoroughbred. Plus, she has great conformation, flashy looks, and a gentle personality. People keep asking me if she's an Arabian. Connemaras and Connemara crosses are truly versatile ponies in every sport, and I'm glad to have such a fine mare.
-A. Goldsmith, Florida

This is in response to the person in the August 2007 "Your Letters" department who said that slaughter was a "necessary evil." I agree that there is a problem now that numerous horses do not have homes. But no horse should have to suffer the pain and abuse that those slaughter horses do. If a horse doesn't have anyone to care for it, or is suffering from neglect, it would be much more humane to have it euthanized, instead of going through the horror of slaughter. Besides, almost all of the horsemeat that comes from slaughterhouses in the United States is exported to foreign countries, so why do we need them in our country? I appreciated Cindy Hale's article in the May 2007 issue ("Unwanted Horses"). It was spoken from a true horse lover.
-K.S, New York

I was appalled and infuriated when I read the response from Elisabeth Bily, "One-Sided Argument," in regards to horse slaughter ("Your Letters"). Ms. Bily stated that most of the horses sent to slaughter were "sick, hurt and abused and better off dead" and "dangerous or useless junk (the product of irresponsible breeding) that no one wants." Horses are living, breathing, pain feeling creatures. Just because an animal cannot speak for itself or reason like a human, does not make its life any less meaningful.

I am a pediatric/neonatal air/ground trauma transport nurse who has a fond love for anything living. I have seen my share of "irresponsible breeding" that produces children who are abused, broken, crack addicted, neglected and unwanted. According to Ms. Bily's theory, we need to take those children and use selective euthanasia (we can't slaughter them; we are too civilized.) because of their potential lack of productiveness.

Education on proper horse and animal ownership responsibilities, along with proper breaking and handling, is the best way to combat this idiocy. Education would better equip people instead of passing on, from generation to generation, these hideous values that make horse slaughter an acceptable form of "population control."
-Holly Ortman, Internet

I am writing in response to the "One-Sided Argument" letter. I was horrified at Ms. Bily's view on horse slaughter. She mentioned that "some of them (horses) are old, sick, hurt and abused, and are better off dead." I used to take care of an old Appaloosa gelding and I have to say, he was the gentlest horse I ever knew. The sick can be healed, the abused can be rehabilitated. The old horses may be better off dead, but they deserve a peaceful euthanasia, not a cold metal room. Does this person know the meaning of hope?

She also said that, "as cities grow and more ground is covered by houses, we have less room for horses to live and less ground to grow hay." Let me ask you this; whose fault is that? The human race is slowly destroying farmland and countryside. Selfishness is what's causing the rise of cities. Now, because of our own irresponsibility, we think we have the right to kill precious lives? Horse slaughter is murder.
-Mary Kacsur, South Carolina

I am writing in response to the letter "One-Sided Argument." I agree that a necessary evil exists in the world of horses, but this letter proves a point about the irresponsible practices of owners, trainers and breeders alike. The term "useless junk" is typical of many so called "high end" show barns. The author obviously places nothing more than monetary value on the lives of horses. If the horses can't jump a 4-foot course, or win hundreds of thousands at the track, or compete at the "elite" level, they are useless and therefore "junk." It is amazing the number of people who can send a horse to slaughter after it has served them for so many years. The numbers of self-proclaimed trainers who ruin these horses with lack of knowledge and throw them into the system is increasing. The racetrack is another story in itself. The breeding industry is not nearly as regulated as it should be. The horses deemed as "useless" need to be evaluated by professionals. The horses that can be saved need sponsors. Many rehabilitators are out there working their tails off to place these horses. The author's use of the term "useless junk" is offensive and an insult to the entire industry. Please Elisabeth Bily, do not call yourself a horse lover.
-Sandra Wiley, New York

Thank you for the wonderful article this month about horse slaughter and the interview with Chris Heyde from saplonline.org ("Battle Over Horse Slaughter Controversy" by Toni McAllister). There are so many misconceptions out there, for example that horse slaughter is HUMANE!

I thank you for providing some real factual information. I am a horse owner, and I will NOT sell my horses at auction, knowing where they go. I don't see how people can do this!
-Barb Beck, Arizona

I just got my most recent issue of Horse Illustrated in the mail today (August 2007). I opened the cover and the first thing I saw were the words "Letting Go" ("Free Rein"). I knew right away what Editor Elizabeth Moyer was about the say. You see, over the past few weeks my 22-year-old Saddlebred, who was taken in as a rescue and companion for my other horse, has been having trouble getting up and down. I know my horses and I knew right away that his time was coming.

While my husband and I were away enjoying the city of Lexington for five days, my older gelding was getting worse at home. I could feel it and I kept calling my mom to see how things were. We were waiting for a polo match to start at the Kentucky Horse Park. It had been postponed due to the heat. While I was waiting I decided to once again check on my horses. I called my mom only to find out Paladin was getting worse. His lame leg was now unable to bear any weight and his balance was failing him. He has lived with the mild lameness happily for years, but unfortunately it is catching up with him.

So I am now making the hardest decision of my life and I indeed feel like the "angel of death." It is so hard to be the one to say it's time, but every ounce of my being says so. Thanks you for sharing your courage with me during this hard time. We have his burial spot picked out and should be making the arrangements with the vet tomorrow.
-Amy D. Clark, Tennessee

Last month's article called "Speed vs. Spa" (by Cindy Hale, August 2007) was absolutely wonderful! It is always nice to be reminded once in a while why grooming your horse regularly and before riding is essential for his health, even if it is only a speed session. The health of one's horse should come before anything, and regular grooming is the best way to find "hidden" cuts, scrapes, swellings, sore spots, et cetera. Plus, it is a great way to use a few minutes of your time to strengthen the ever-increasing bond between horse and rider. Brushing your horse makes him feel good, and relaxes him. If he sees that you are the cause of this enjoyment, he will love you all the more for it!
-Renee LaPlante, New York