

Cavel International is Back in the Horse Slaughter Business

The nation's last remaining horse slaughter plant has been granted an injunction while it appeals its case.

07-21-2007

A federal appeals court has ruled that the nation's last horse-slaughtering plant, Cavel International in DeKalb, Ill., can reopen while it challenges a state law that forced it to close twice in the last two months.

The plant slaughters horses and sells the meat overseas for human consumption.

In late May, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed into law a measure banning the slaughter of horses for human consumption, or the import, export or possession of horse meat designated for human consumption.

The Illinois law forced the plant to close in May, but federal judge Frederick J. Kapala later ruled that Cavel could reopen for 10 days while it challenged the state ban. The judge refused to extend the stay beyond the 10-day period, so the plant was forced to close its doors again.

Kapala later ruled that Cavel's challenges to the state ban on slaughter were without merit. The company appealed Kapala's ruling and on July 18, a U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago granted Cavel's request for an injunction prohibiting officials from enforcing the state law. In the brief ruling, the court said "irreparable harm" would come to Cavel if not allowed to resume operations while the appeal is pending.

The Cavel plant has operated in DeKalb for about 20 years and before the recent closures, slaughtered about 1,000 horses a week, according to plant officials.

Earlier this year, two Texas-based slaughter facilities that processed horses were forced to close. Both plants exhausted all appeals to reopen.