

Horse welfare and unwanted horses: industry perspective

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End of life: the situation of the European horse industry

What do we know about it ?

Figures collected in France in 2012

Slaughter: 48% of the old horses produced in France, out of which 14% in foreign countries, decreasing by 33% since beginning 2017

Retirement: at around 9.3 years old. With a livestock of 1 million (France) and a life expectancy of 30 years,

→ average 300 000 horses over 15 years old with a cost of 1050 euros per year/horse (without slaughter/euthanasia costs)

Abandonment : not much in France but the phenomenon is increasing (opening of the big refuge centre specialised in horses in 2016).

Result:

→ An average of + 20% of old horses = congestion of the market and lower price per horse.

→ Increase in retirement costs and welfare problems,

→ Stronger pressure on agricultural land

End of life: the situation of the European horse industry

Estimate at EU level

- 50% of 7 millions EU equines excluded from the food chain
- 2 millions of older horses at an annual keeping cost of €1500 (slaughter and removal costs included) = € 3 billions
- 2 millions hectares necessary to correspond to best welfare conditions

Missing at EU level:

- European estimate of old horses per category in order to deal with the reality and find the right answer together
- Full and regular data on equines by Eurostat
- Complete data on horse in TRACES (in order to ensure an efficient traceability)

End of life: Finding solutions together

Equines retire at a different ages: racehorses very early (3 – 4 years old), sport horses later (between 14 and 18 years old), leisure and working horses around 20 years old.

Setting up a viable model for older horses with professionals:

- Race and sport horses need retraining - develop professional programmes such as IFAR, Au-delà des pistes (it exists for racing horses but not for sport)
- Develop Social mediation programmes/hippotherapy initiatives

Food chain exclusion: taking the impact into account:

- The 6 month withdrawal/ the unfair situation between European and foreign horses
- Systematic exclusion from the food chain by owners could create an unsustainable situation

Managing and organising the end of horse life in good welfare conditions

- **Set up the economic model of end of life** with both professionals and amateurs : training, joint responsibility
- **Promote a responsible ownership attitude** : the owner must be trained in horse care. If he wants to exclude his equine from the food chain, he must assume the financial cost (insurance for the 10 years on average of the horse's retirement.)
- **Create the access to the agricultural land** (and the horse status that permits it)
Exclusion from the food chain could make the fulfilment of this need impossible in a context of pressure on agricultural land.
- **Establish a coherence in the access to the food chain** - Proposals:
 - Reinforcing veterinarian checks during the horse's life and combatting the illegal internet medicine market
 - Insure human health protection by 6 months withdrawal period for all equines + test on carcasses