Unwanted Horses – an NGO perspective

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Overview

1. European equine sector
2. What is an unwanted horse?
3. The problem – UK case study
4. What are the main drivers of this situation?
5. What can be done about it?
World Horse Welfare

- Leading equine charity for 90 years
- Works across 4 continents
- Covers full spectrum of equine world
- 120 employees – €10m turnover
- Education, campaigns and hands-on care
- Policy engagement
- Advisor to regulators – e.g. FEI
Equines in the EU in the 21st century

- Multiple uses: sport, leisure, companion, working, farm, therapy….
- Multiple change of uses in lifetime commonplace
- Can live 30+ years
European equine sector

Jobs, Growth and Investment
• 7 million equidae
• €100 billion+ per annum to economy
• 2.6 million hectares of land
• Key rural employer
  ➢ Second largest in some Member States
  ➢ At least 180,000 jobs in France
• Diverse but coordinated sector e.g. European Horse Network
What is an unwanted horse?

- Economic value
- Emotional value
- Utility value
UK situation analysis

- Equine population: 800,000+
- 2012: crisis erupts due to economic downturn
  - Estimated 9,000 horses at risk
  - ↑26% calls to RSPCA welfare line
  - ↑22% reports of equine neglect

RSPCA data
...and the problem remains

- **2016**: 1,400 welfare cases investigated to World Horse Welfare & 8,000 calls to our welfare line
- **2017**: Approximately 7,000+ horses in the UK at risk of abuse, abandonment or neglect
What are the causes?

Excessive supply over demand – wastage

- Financial crash
- Low market value
- Rising costs for end of life services

- Irresponsible breeding
- Overbreeding: leisure & fashion

- Legislative limitations:
  - access to euthanasia
  - exclusion from food chain
Access to euthanasia in EU

KEY
- Green: Euthanasia allowed for any reason
- Yellow: Euthanasia only on veterinary advice
- Orange: Unknown
Solutions

1. **Enforcement**: Equine ID Regulation (EU) 2015/262 – Member State animal health and welfare legislation

2. **Regulation**: affordable end of life options

3. **Education**: Julie Girling MEP Own Initiative Report on responsible ownership and care of equidae
Conclusion

• Equine sector hugely relevant to the EU
• Coordinated sector to help meet the challenge of the EU’s unwanted horses
• EU Animal Welfare Platform can play a pivotal role through the establishment of an (informal?) equine sub-group

Everyone is responsible...
Thank you!

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