



WorldHorseWelfare

World Horse Welfare's manifesto for the European elections:



Here's where we stand on some of the key issues affecting horses in the European Union – do you know where your candidates stand on these?

Long-distance transport of horses across Europe to slaughter

Every year, around 65,000 horses are transported long-distance to slaughter. The length of their journeys, which can last for days, and the conditions in which they travel lead to great suffering through stress, injury, thirst, fatigue and exhaustion. Often, they pass many slaughterhouses which could take the horses, making the suffering totally unnecessary. In addition, many of the horses are likely to develop diseases as their immune systems are weakened by these long journeys.

We are calling for a much shorter, finite journey limit, and improvements to the conditions in which the horses travel – aiming for slaughter at source and a carcass-only trade.

Even the EU's own scientific advisors have stated that due to the reported increase in disease associated problems amongst these horses, there should be a significant reduction in the journey time laid down in the EU legislation. We believe that based on the scientific evidence this should be a maximum of 9-12 hours – but no action has been taken by the Commission to make this a reality.

Will your candidates join citizens across Europe and call for an end to these needless and cruel journeys?

Horse identification that works

2013's horse meat scandal highlighted the gaps in Europe's equine identification (horse passport) legislation. All too often, the authorities can't trace horses, and recent surveys indicate that the regulations are poorly understood by horse owners, vets, passport issuing organisations and enforcement officers alike. Perhaps unsurprisingly, compliance is extremely poor.

There is much that Member States can do to help – but Brussels needs to get involved too. Fraud would be made much more difficult if the



Equine Identification Regulation were to be changed, requiring higher standards for identification documents and more effective microchipping. The new Commission and Parliament must continue with the existing 'five-point plan', drafted in response to the horse meat scandal, which includes plans to require Member States to put central databases into place so that horses can be traced, and reduces the number of organisations issuing identity documents. A more robust and enforceable system is vital if there was a serious disease outbreak, and will help to stop unscrupulous individuals from exploiting loopholes in the law, often at the expense of horse welfare.

Will your candidates support improvements to the equine identification system?

European legislation that protects horse welfare and health

2013 saw the Commission develop ambitious plans for both animal welfare and animal health. If these plans are to really help horses, any studies on animal welfare must take into account the unique relationship that horses have with humans, and the many roles that they play across Europe as much-loved companion and leisure animals, elite athletes, transporters of people and goods, agricultural animals and sources of food - as well as the semi-feral horses and ponies which can be found in many areas of Europe. The welfare and health of every horse, no matter its value or purpose, should be respected and protected equally.

Animal health legislation must be updated as a matter of urgency – the current European regulations on disease are badly out of date and do not provide the level of protection that our horses need. The new Parliament and Commission must continue with the ongoing work on the new Animal Health Regulation, to help protect and improve the health of all horses.

Will your candidates support legislation that protects all horses?

Food labelling that helps consumers make welfare-friendly decisions

Consumers of horse meat across Europe are not being fully informed about the source of the horse meat they consume, and this is unacceptable. Under the current law, horse meat is stamped as the product of the country where the animal was slaughtered – even if it was raised in a completely different country and transported for thousands



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of miles at the end of its life. Consumers therefore can't tell whether they are buying meat from a horse that had to suffer injury and pain caused by long-distance transport to slaughter. Without this information, consumers are unable to make informed decisions which enable them to influence welfare through their buying choices.

This information has been available for beef for several years, and new legislation in 2013 changed the law for some other types of meat so consumers of poultry, pork, sheep and lamb meat will soon be able to tell where the meat that they're buying really came from – but the situation for horse meat remains unchanged. We need new legislation so that horse meat consumers can make genuinely informed decisions.



Will your candidate support calls for better country of origin labelling for horse meat?

Robust enforcement is vital

Where the law is inadequate, we will always call for new legislation to protect horses from suffering. But we know that's only part of the picture. If laws are to be effective, then they must be enforced robustly and evenly across the whole EU.

Although the responsibility for enforcement lies with Member States, the European Commission can do a great deal to help – by producing guidance for Member States on how to interpret and enforce legislation, by making sure that legislation is written in a way that makes it easy to understand and enforce, by unannounced inspection visits and by taking action against Member States who fail to comply with and enforce the law.



Will your candidate call upon the Commission to make sure the law is enforced across Europe?

European Elections 2014: Will you speak up for horses?



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