

Overview of California Statewide Public Opinion Survey Report on Horse Slaughter 1997

sponsored by the California Equine Council

**Conducted by Decision Research Washington D.
C./California**



SAMPLE

600 complete interviews with a random sample of likely November 1998 voters in California. Telephone interviews were conducted by professional interviewers from March 8-11, 1997. In a scientifically selected sample of this size, normal statistical error would be plus or minus 4%. That is to say that in 95% of all samples drawn from the same population, the findings would not differ from the findings reported here by more than 4%.

THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CITIZEN BALLOT MEASURES

When asked what they think results in better laws and policy, 66% said laws made through citizen ballot initiatives, while 23% said state laws passed by the state's elected officials. About 11% are unsure. About 51% of the voters say a very convincing argument for the "Save the American Horse" measure is that the special interests in the legislature have failed to stop the slaughter, so voters have to take direct action. An additional 27% say it is somewhat convincing.

FAMILIARITY WITH HORSE SLAUGHTER ISSUES

Most Californians have not heard about horses being bred in America and slaughtered for food in other countries. Three out of five respondents had not heard or read anything about American horses being bred for slaughter, but fully 40% had heard or read something about it.

VOTERS BELIEVE THAT SELLING HORSES FOR SLAUGHTER FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION IS ILLEGAL...OR IT SHOULD BE

Fully 69% agree, and 27% disagree that even though there may be a market overseas for horsemeat, it should not be allowed to be exported from the United States.

FEW VOTERS WOULD EAT HORSEMEAT

Only 11% agree they would eat horsemeat if it were legal and available in California. About 87% would not, and 2% are unsure.

HORSES ARE NOT CONSIDERED FOOD ANIMALS

Only 3% of the voters say that horses are a food animal to be used for meat like pigs, cattle and sheep, with an additional 23% saying they are farm animals. However, 38% say horses are recreation and sporting animals, and 31% say they are companion animals. About 6% are unsure.

INITIALLY VOTERS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVOR PROHIBITING THE SLAUGHTER OF HORSES FOR CONSUMPTION.

Nearly 70% would favor a "Save the American Horse" measure to prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption. About 26% are opposed and 4% are unsure.

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SURVEY, SUPPORT FOR THE PROHIBITION IS UNCHANGED.

With 70% indicating they would favor prohibition, and 26% saying they would vote "no," with 4% undecided on the issue.

SUPPORTERS:

Say they are companion animals/Say they like animals/Say they like horses in particular/Say it is cruel and inhumane/Say animals should not be killed/Say they are pets/Say they should not be eaten.

TOP TEN REASONS TO SUPPORT PROHIBITING HORSE SLAUGHTER

(In order of importance to voters):

- Horses are cruelly slaughtered.
- Horses should be afforded the same protection against slaughter as dogs and cats.
- Legislature has failed, so voters must take action directly.
- Horses can be slaughtered without the knowledge of the previous owners.
- Horse meat sold as gourmet item, not to feed hungry people.
- Horses should be humanely put to sleep, not bludgeoned.
- Don't eat horses here, shouldn't send overseas to be eaten.
- Horses are used for recreation not food.
- Horses not bred for food, no need to regulate them.
- Horses are part of our heritage and culture.