

● Bill Urging Restrictions on Horse Slaughter in Canada Dies

Private member's Bill C-571, which sought to amend the Meat Inspection Act and the Safe Food for Canadians Act, was defeated in the House of Commons on May 14th, with 102 votes in favour and 155 against.

Introduced by NDP MP Alex Atamanenko of British Columbia Southern Interior, the bill was intended to place restrictions on the slaughter of horses for human consumption. Specifically, Bill C-571 would have prohibited horses from crossing provincial and international borders for slaughter (import and export), with the exception of horses raised primarily for human consumption and accompanied by a lifetime health record. It would have also banned the production of horse meat products or meat products derived from any other equine for human consumption in Canada.

This was the third incarnation of the bill brought to Parliament by Atamanenko. He first introduced a similar bill called C-544 about four years ago. Private member's bills are rarely passed, and Atamanenko failed to even gain the support of his own NDP party. Only the Liberals officially supported the bill. Now that it has been killed, it is uncertain whether the cause will be taken up by any politicians going forward. Atamanenko's term as an MP will end with the federal election next year. He has no plans to continue in federal politics, but he does hope that the problem of horse slaughter will be solved. "My ultimate wish is that we have some legislation to do exactly what my bill contained," he said. "That is definitely not possible with this government."

When he created Bill C-571, Atamanenko sought to bring Canada in line with European regulations on horse meat. In Europe, horses that are destined for the dinner plate must have passports by the time they are six months of age, as well as comprehensive records of all medications they receive throughout their lifetimes. Europe refuses to accept meat slaughtered in the U.S. for the precise reason that the system of identification and medical history falls far short of meeting European requirements. Canadian horse meat, on the other hand, is accepted – in spite of the obvious reality that more than half of the horses slaughtered in Canada have come from the U.S.

With no horse experience prior to taking on this cause, Atamanenko said he was approached by the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition several years ago, who educated him on the horse slaughter industry in Canada. "It's an emotional issue, but the more I learned, the more I realized it was a safety issue," he said.

Further, Atamanenko said that if the legislation he proposed



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CANADIAN HORSE DEFENCE COALITION

NDP MP Alex Atamanenko became a champion for horses, even though he had no links to, or interest in, the horse industry. Now that Bill C-571 has been defeated, who will take up the cause if Canadian horse owners won't?

were to become law one day, it would force horse owners and horse organizations to be more responsible. "It would place the onus on owners and organizations to humanely destroy unwanted horses, just as we do for other pets," he said.

In April, an unsigned and undated letter from Equine Canada president Al Patterson to Atamanenko surfaced in which Patterson expressed opposition to Bill C-571 on behalf of the organization. Patterson argued that banning horse slaughter is not the answer, that as long as there are unwanted horses, there is a welfare issue with abandonment and neglect if slaughter is not an option. That may be true, but there is no conclusive proof of his argument, largely because there has not been enough public pressure to identify, and then solve, the problems which exist today.

Atamanenko believes that in order for things to change, horse slaughter will need to become an election issue, and it will need to have enough momentum to survive the die-off that so many platform promises suffer after a party gets into power. None of that will happen as long as the Canadian population remains indifferent. "It's up to the public to put pressure on the politicians now, while they are in campaign mode," he said.

~ with files by Karen Robinson

● Senior Horse Challenge

Equine Guelph has partnered with Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd. to offer the Senior Horse Challenge, a new online learning tool for owners, caregivers and riders of older horses.

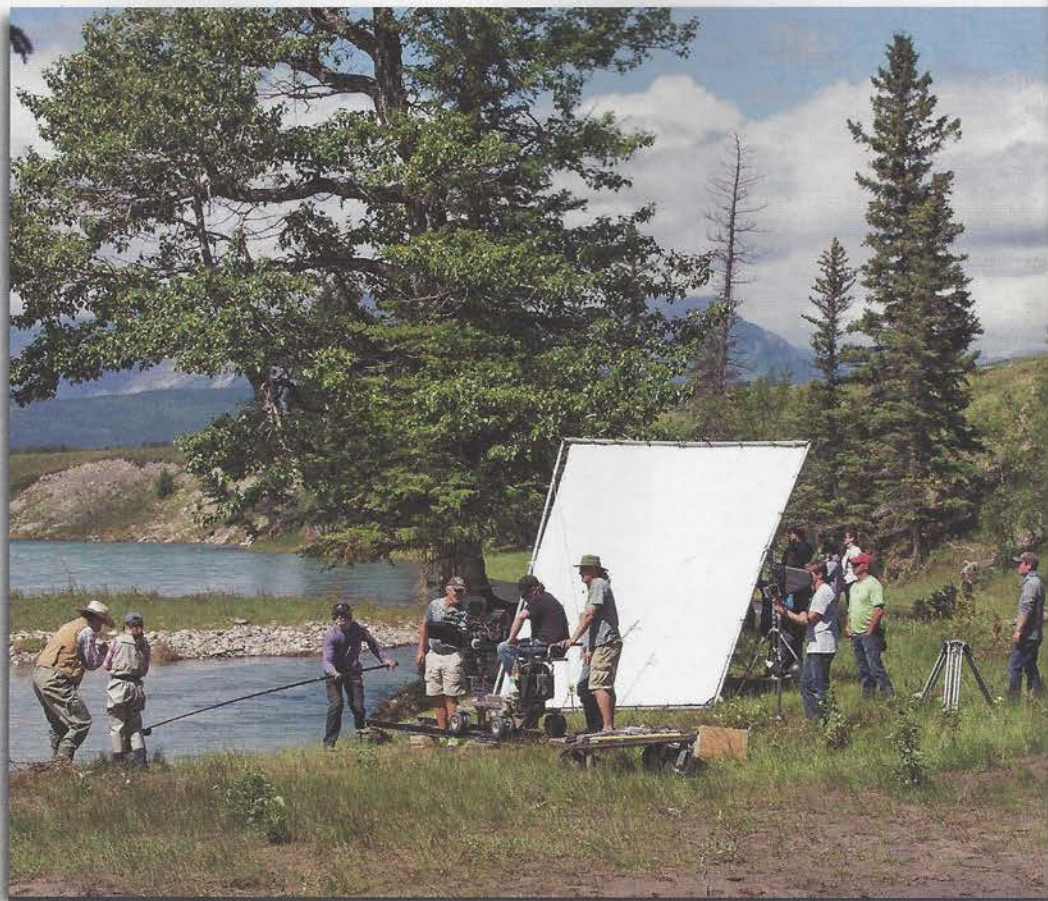
Twenty quiz questions are designed to help people understand the health challenges including diseases, disorders and conditions

that are common to the aging equine.

Recognizing changes and not just dismissing them as "old age setting in" is a large part of the responsibility assumed when caring for the senior horse. Take the challenge at equineguelph.ca/Tools/senior_horse.php

The Making of *Heartland*

- *Heartland* is filmed primarily in and around Calgary, High River and Millarville, Alberta.
- It takes 15 days to film two episodes.
- There are more than 200 people who work on *Heartland* to make it as good as it is. This includes cast, crew and support staff, and post-production crew.
- Ray Breckenridge is taking over the reins as Head Wrangler this year, as John Scott, who was Head Wrangler for the first seven seasons, has a lot on the go and is unavailable. John still owns many of the animals seen on the show, including Stormy, who plays Spartan. They will all be back for season eight.
- For insurance purposes, the actors have stunt doubles that perform the more risky riding manoeuvres. Also, if any of the actors were to get hurt and filming had to be delayed, it would be very costly to the production.
- The interior sets at the Calgary studio include the interior of every room at the ranch house, the interior of the barn (identical to the actual barn at the ranch, where filming is done following animals or characters going outside from the barn), Scott's vet clinic, Caleb's trailer (a replica of the original which can expand to allow crews to film inside). Maggie's Diner is shot on location in downtown High River, and one of the cabins at the Dude Ranch is fully adorned and interior scenes are shot on location.
- Ty's loft is filmed in the barn on the ranch set.
- Most outdoor rodeo or horse events are filmed at the Millarville Racetrack.



A fishing scene with Jack and Georgie (seen on the far left) is being filmed. The large white sheet is a 'bounce,' reflecting the sun to eliminate the shadows on the actors' faces.

have been super duper fun! Hopefully, *Heartland* will let me do some more of my own stunt work in season eight and I can show off what I've learned during the off season.

"Though I love jumping, whenever I get the chance, I absolutely LOVE to ride bareback. I like bareback because it feels more natural and free. That is what I love most about riding, the feeling of freedom! I also love bareback because it makes me feel more connected with the horse.

"Some of my favourite scenes to shoot on *Heartland* were the jumping and trick riding scenes. I would love it if Georgie could do some liberty work like Amy did in season five. It would be like a combination of trick riding and bareback!"

THE BOYS

In the episode "Better Days" from season seven, Ty (Graham Wardle) helps Amy get over her fear of working with a horse that injured her. When asked if he had any fears, scuba diving – or breathing under water – was his answer. "I've tried it three times," he said. "First time wasn't bad. Didn't spend much time under. Second time was great. I swam around in a shallow pool. Third time I went into a deep

pool and lost it. I couldn't do it. I panicked and unsafely surfaced. It was the most unusual thing, I have never experienced such fear in my body. I could see it happening and I wasn't able to calm myself down. I'm working on it though. I have a mask and snorkel so I will continue to practice and then one day return to the deeper waters."

Shaun Johnston, who plays Jack – the patriarch of *Heartland* – reminisced about his favourite scene. "There's one episode – "Man's Best Friend" in season three – it's a story about Jack, being railroaded by his family members to buy a new truck, and so he does, and, of course, that goes to hell in a hand cart. He can't stand the idea of change and he can't stand the idea of new fancy, fangled equipment, so it just becomes a nightmare. It ends up leading Jack to some very poignant recollections of his deceased wife. We get to see her for the first time in a flashback sequence. That was a fantastic experience for me – and the audience. The audience loved seeing Lindy [Amy and her sister Lou's grandma], in her youth and her beauty."

Shaun said he considers himself "half a cowboy." Of his horse experience, he said, "I'm a farm kid, ranch kid. I worked with