

Dr. Bruce Little Testifies on Proposal to Ban Horse Slaughter

Springfield, IL (March 16, 2007) – Dr. Bruce Little, AVMA Executive Vice President, testified this morning before the Illinois House Executive Committee on House Bill 1711 (Molaro D-Chicago).

House Bill 1711 amends the Illinois Horse Meat Act and provides that it is unlawful for any person to slaughter a horse if that person knows or should know that any of the horse meat will be used for human consumption and that any person who knowingly does so shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. Provides that it is unlawful for any person to possess, to import into or export from the State, or to sell, buy, give away, hold, or accept any horse meat if that person knows or should know that any of the horse meat will be used for human consumption and that any person who knowingly does so shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. Repeals a Section that excludes registered horse meat that is labeled as such in hermetically sealed containers and horse meat prepared in federally inspected plants from the provisions of the Act. Amends the Animals Intended for Food Act, the Illinois Equine Infectious Anemia Control Act, the Humane Care for Animals Act, and the Humane Slaughter of Livestock Act to make related changes.

"The AVMA believes that animal welfare is a human responsibility that encompasses all aspects of animal well being, including proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling, and, when necessary, humane euthanasia," Dr. Little testified. "We also believe this legislation ignores that responsibility."

Dr. Little closed his testimony by leaving a profound message with the committee. "No one understands what is necessary for ensuring the welfare of horse better than the medical professionals who care for them," said Dr. Little. As one of those medical professionals, and on behalf of our Association's members, I can assure you that this legislation is likely to do more harm than good to the welfare of American horses."

Dr. Little, Adrian Hochstadt (AVMA Director of State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs) and ISVMA lobbyist Terry Steczo were also able to meet with key legislators (including the Chairman of the House Executive Committee) prior to the hearing. A possible compromise was discussed and, with an assurance that an effort will be made to explore an agreement between animal welfare advocates and the veterinary professionals, the bill passed the committee on a vote of 8-4.

ISVMA would like to thank Dr. Little and Adrian Hochstadt for lending their support and expertise on this important issue. Their presence helped raise the level of dialogue and will hopefully lead to a reasonable compromise that best addresses the welfare needs of America's horses.

AVMA Updates State Associations on the Pet Food Recall

The AVMA is in contact with the FDA, Menu Foods, all of the affected pet food brands, the Pet Food Institute, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, and the American College of Veterinary Nutrition. A compilation of information can be found at www.avma.org.

Materials available on the AVMA website include information for the general public and information specifically geared to veterinarians. In response to reports from AVMA members that they were unable to access recall information off of the Menu Foods Web site, the AVMA Web site production team captured that information and placed it on the AVMA site. This should help veterinarians and the general public access that information. Other information includes:

- Press Releases
 - AVMA advice to consumers
 - Homemade Pet Food Requires Study of Nutrition, AVMA warns
- FAQ (includes telephone numbers for reporting suspected cases in individual states)

- Statements from Hills
- Statement from Proctor & Gamble
- Statement from Purina
- Guidelines for veterinarians from the ACVIM
- Fact sheet for veterinarians from IAMs
- A reprint of the June 1, 2006 JAVMA article, "Timely Topics in Nutrition: Aflatoxicosis in Dogs and Dealing with Suspected Contaminated Commercial Foods
- FDA Consumer Complaint Coordinator
- FDA Information on Marketing a Pet Food Product

FDA Update:

Today's press conference with Dr. Steven Sundlof of the FDA reiterated that they do not yet have a definitive cause.

They reiterated that to date there are **14 confirmed cases**. Nine cats died during a Menu Foods company quarterly taste testing trial (25 cats used during the trial and 15 dogs; no dogs died); 4 cats of individual consumers and 1 dog from an individual pet owner.

Inspections: The Kansas plant was inspected after a complaint. The New Jersey plant was inspected last year. The plants have changed their supplier for wheat gluten though it is not yet known if that was the definitive cause. So far, they believe it is only affecting the semi-moist and cuts and gravy foods.

FDA is determining the source of wheat gluten.

Keep Your Eyes Open for ISVMA Mailings

ISVMA has mailed information on the revised sales tax agreement and a copy of the new regulation to all members and member prospects. If you have a colleague that receives a membership application form and appeal for membership with this mailing, encourage them to join ISVMA! The work we did on the sales tax issue is just one example of many that indicate why every veterinarian in Illinois should belong to their state association. Membership benefits both the individual veterinarian and the veterinary profession!

The February/March Epitome was also just mailed. This issue is very late for a number of reasons. Therefore, you will receive the April/May issue very soon afterwards! We are back on schedule with the Epitome and hope to remain so in the future. We apologize for the delay in the most recent issue.

A second membership appeal will be sent to member prospects in about a week. This appeal will outline some of the most common benefits of membership in ISVMA. In case you wish to see some of these reasons to convince a colleague to join, you can find them on the [ISVMA website](#).

About the Photo in This Issue...

The Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) is the only one of the world's thirty species of true shrikes that occurs exclusively in North America. Like other shrikes, it inhabits ecotones, grasslands, and other open habitats and feeds on a variety of invertebrate and vertebrate prey. Compared to most birds, its head is large in proportion to its body size—hence the name Loggerhead.

The Loggerhead Shrike breeds from central prairie provinces and Canadian border southward to Florida and southern Mexico. It winters from very southern Oregon, southern Kansas, Tennessee, and Virginia southward to southern Mexico.

Throughout most of the southern part of its range, the Loggerhead Shrike is resident; northern populations are migratory. Where resident, this species usually lives in pairs on permanent territories. Some pairs spend the entire year on a single territory; outside the breeding season, mates may defend neighboring territories, which are coalesced at the beginning of nesting.

This shrike, like others, is a small avian predator that hunts from perches and impales its prey on sharp objects such as thorns and barbed-wire fences. Although such predatory behavior mimics that of some raptors, impaling behavior represents a unique adaptation to the problem of eating large prey without benefit of the stronger feet and talons of raptors. In addition, the hooked bill, flanked by horny tomial projections and functionally similar to the notched upper bill of falcons, further sets shrikes apart as distinctive in the order Passeriformes. Being both passerines and top-level predators, these birds occupy a unique position in the food chain.

Despite its wide distribution, the Loggerhead Shrike is one of the few North American passerines whose populations have declined continent-wide in recent decades. Changes in human land-use practices, the spraying of biocides, and competition with species that are more tolerant of human-induced changes appear to be major factors contributing to this decline.

I photographed this Loggerhead Shrike at the Salton Sea, California in February 2007.

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