

**Question for written answer E-005436/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Michèle Rivasi (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Horsemeat from the Americas imported into the EU

A number of international animal rights organisations have drawn attention to the conditions under which horses from non-EU countries, including Argentina, Canada, Mexico and Uruguay, are transported, handled, fattened and slaughtered. More than 60 % of horsemeat consumed in the EU comes from these countries.

A study has found that the horses – nearly all of which were used in equestrian sports or as draught horses – are transported to abattoirs under conditions which bear no comparison with those regarded as acceptable in the Union, and which are completely at odds with minimum animal welfare standards. The horses undergo long journeys without food and water in lorries which are old and dangerous, and which have no partitions to prevent the animals falling. In some cases, they are transported in sealed lorries, meaning that the driver cannot help the horses if a problem occurs. The injuries which many of these already very frail horses have when they reach the abattoirs demonstrate the seriousness of this problem.

What is more, the traceability of horses from these countries cannot be guaranteed, which poses a food safety risk. The current system for establishing a horse's identity and keeping track of the drugs it has received is based on declarations given on the owner's honour, which are impossible to verify. What is more, these declarations cover only the last six months of a horse's life, even though the EU has imposed a blanket ban on the administration of dangerous substances such as phenylbutazone to horses intended for consumption.

What measures does the Commission intend to take to protect horses and consumers in the context of the import of horsemeat from third countries? In particular,

1. Given that the EU is the main destination for horsemeat, what measures will the Commission take to address the mistreatment of horses during their transportation to abattoirs or to assembly or fattening facilities?
2. Inspection reports from the Food and Veterinary Office show that the systems for establishing a horse's identity and keeping track of the drugs it has received are not on a par with those required under EU law. In view of the shortcomings throughout the food chain in terms of recording relevant information, what steps will the Commission take to ensure an equivalent level of traceability to that required in the Union?
3. Will the Commission suspend the import of horsemeat from countries where completely different rules apply?