

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

MAR 17 2017

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

Mr. Alistair MacGregor, M.P.
Cowichan–Malahat–Langford
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6



Dear Mr. MacGregor:

I am writing in response to your correspondence of December 14, 2016, concerning horse slaughter in Canada, which was forwarded to me on February 2, 2017, by the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The Government of Canada treats food safety issues very seriously. Canada has one of the best food safety systems in the world. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) verifies that the slaughter facilities it inspects comply with federal food safety laws. This applies to all meat, including horsemeat.

All operators who slaughter horses for human consumption must get the health and medical history of the horse for the 180 days before slaughter. The 180-day time period is considered sufficient because it allows a generous window of opportunity for an animal to naturally eliminate remnants of medication that may have been previously administered. They must also obtain a declaration of any non-permitted substances as found in the Equine Information Document (EID).

The EID system is one tool among several that are used to provide safe equine meat in Canada. Slaughter facilities must still comply with Canadian laws, and the CFIA inspects those facilities pre- and post-slaughter. The CFIA also conducts random residue sampling of meat, as do countries importing Canadian horsemeat. I note your specific concerns about phenylbutazone. This drug has a maximum residue limit of zero. If any trace of such a drug was found during testing here or abroad, the CFIA or Health Canada would do a risk assessment and take corrective action.

Given the low rate of detections of unacceptable residues in Canadian horsemeat, we are confident in the efficacy of the system. There have been no reported cases of human illness resulting from eating Canadian horsemeat.

I hope that my comments are helpful in addressing your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Philpott".

The Honourable Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P.

Canada