Equine passports and end of life decisions: Have we produced a welfare crisis?

S Schofield and C Brigden

Abstract 24101
Many horse owners will be faced with emotional decisions relating to potential equine end of life situations.

Clear evidence of the lack of effectiveness (Eg: Boden et al., 2012; Robin et al., 2011)

Aim: to explore horse owners’ perceptions of the horse passport to identify recommended future amendments to protect equine welfare
Self-administered, online survey

25 questions (open and closed)

Horse owners’ experiences of passport regulations

Horse owners’ feelings regarding passports regulations and their potential links to welfare issues

Results analysed using $\chi^2$ test of association and content analysis
Figure 1: Proportions of respondents’ horses signed out / not signed out of meat chain (total n=165)
Most owners (88.1%) have considered options for EoL.

Consideration was positively associated with length of ownership (P <0.05).
Figure 2: General attitudes to the use of horses as meat
• Horse owners “buy-in” to passport regulations, but lack full understanding

• Effectiveness of passpporting provokes emotional responses from many owners:
  
  "Scrap them altogether. Burden on the law abiding, easily circumvented by the law breakers”

  "Scrap the lot - it is a waste of time and money”

• The majority of this population are excluded from the meat trade by their passport, limiting disposal options for current or future owners.
• 1/3 of owners were open to the possibility of using the meat trade to dispose of their animals, but many would be prohibited by passport regulations.

• 1/2 of owners saw potential benefits in the use of horse meat, especially re. potential reduction in breeding and welfare issues.

• Owner negativity towards horsemeat linked to risks of breeding for meat purposes and general ethical standpoints.

• Horses enjoying long ownership are likely to be well provided for.

• Biggest risk is to the unwanted horse.
Aim: To explore horse owners’ perceptions of the horse passports to identify recommended future amendments to protect equine welfare

- Owners clearly lack confidence in the passport
- Recent research (Horseman et al., 2016) concurred that “passport legislation failures” and “high cost of euthanasia” were some of the root causes of poor welfare
“We recommend that industry leaders, including welfare charities, lobby the Government to seek amendments to the existing EU passport legislation to allow horses that are currently banned from entering the human food chain, due to treatment with certain prohibited substances, to be slaughtered for human consumption are a suitable withdrawal period”

(Horseman et al., 2016)
Applications to industry:-

• Help aid research into end of life decision making

• Appreciate potential influence of passport regulations on options for horses and their owners
Any Questions?
References

