

In Memory of Muniton ~ Please Don't Eat America's Horses

Muniton is a horse who should not have gone to slaughter. Muniton was a 2007 foal, sired by Prime Timber, out of Cracker Night. He had 39 starts and won \$144,828. Nearly everyone and everything failed Muniton, particularly the laws that were written and implemented in the U.S on July 31, 2010, in accordance with guidelines created by the European Union. Many believed that these guidelines would stop transportation of horses from the US to slaughter, or at least delay the process for the six month period in which the horses were to have been sworn as free of drugs that would make them unfit for human consumption.

It became evident very quickly after the date, that what many feared and anticipated, that the required certificates and affidavits that were to be signed by sellers and surrendered to the buyers of horses, particularly those bound for slaughter, were not reliable. Muniton is a perfect example. A former racehorse, retired in the summer of 2010 shortly before the effective date of the EU guidelines, Muniton changed hands from his former trainer to an individual, who quickly made plans to sell him, and within a very short period of time, he was bound for auction. The change of ownership and the ensuing conflicts that arose have a stranger-than-fiction edge, and the story was the topic of several message boards and reported by news media in several areas. It was thought that perhaps Muniton was sold to an unknown individual, was stolen, was traded, transported, or killed, but because it wasn't clear exactly what happened to Muniton, he was the subject of a national search, with the objective to return him to his former trainer, who was shocked and shattered to know that he may have been shipped to slaughter, and if he were to be found, the trainer wanted him back to ensure his welfare.

The trainer disclosed to those who were searching for Muniton, that he had been given phenylbutazole, commonly known as "Bute", which is a non steroidal anti-inflammatory. Muniton had suffered a suspensory injury and bute is typically given for this type of injury to reduce inflammation and pain. He had been given bute shortly before he was transferred to the person who had him for a very short time before he disappeared. In accordance with the terms of the EU Guidelines, a horse must be warranted drug free for six months prior to slaughter. The affidavit that changes hands between the seller and the buyer, who in this particular case appears to be a buyer who then sells horses to a supplier in Canada, apparently signed and swore that this horse was drug-free. This horse entered the market with a drug in his system that is potentially harmful to humans, violating the EU guidelines, and that could only be ascertained should this particular horse be tested after slaughter. The testing is purely random and as it has been explained, since there is apparently no end user mechanism in place at the present time, testing is virtually non-existent at this time. The Canadian plants rely upon the affidavits as being true and legal documents, verifying the animals are drug-free.

Phenylbutazole is a multi-organ toxin to humans, and according to the EU Guidelines, any horse who has ever received bute either during a racing career or for a pasture injury, post surgical procedure, for colic or any number of illnesses or injuries, is considered to be excluded as a "food animal". The residue is present in the horse's tissues for lifetime. It causes toxicity to the gastrointestinal system in humans, endocrinological system, severe electrolyte imbalance that can cause heart failure and death, it is a carcinogen, most specifically in the lungs, and can cause acute multisystem organ failure, or isolated liver, renal or hematological system failures. There are a total of 55 pharmaceutical products that are typically administered to horses, some of which require the six month clearance period. Among them are anabolic steroids, banamine, a milder but more commonly administered non-

steroidal inflammatory, furosamide, otherwise known as "Lasix", commonly given to thoroughbreds to prevent bleeding from the lungs, antimicrobial, "antibiotics" specifically, which are given for a multitude of conditions such as strangles, to prevent infection in injuries, and many other bacterial illnesses. Others are wormers, vaccines, and even more common supplemental preparations.

The Guidelines were designed to protect humans, but those who are dedicated to the abolition of slaughter, have dearly hoped that horses would not be sent to slaughter as nearly all have received vaccinations and dewormers, all of which contain toxins that would harm humans. But then the hopes of all those who are dedicated to the abolition of slaughter believed that the laws that were enacted to prohibit transportation of horses in double-decker trailers were quickly dashed to pieces with the realization that the transporters found ways to bypass the checkpoints. Bypassing to the extent that trailers are unloaded on the US side of the borders and the horses are walked across the borders at locations outside the checkpoints, or they are offloaded and reloaded into smaller trailers and taken across the borders after traveling hundreds of miles for hours with rest or food or water, also in violation of the transportation laws. I suppose it should have been anticipated that the affidavits and health certificates would be worth less than the paper on which they are written.

This is a horse that was not "unwanted", a catchphrase that has been constructed by the slaughter industry and supporters to justify the ending of horses' lives by slaughter. Many individuals mobilized to help search for him, particularly Deborah Jones (CA) of the Thoroughbred Identity Protection Association. Deborah has connected thoroughbreds who ended up at auctions and in feedlots to former owners and trainers, and when she learned of Munion's "disappearance", she worked almost nonstop to locate him, so that he could be reclaimed by Matthew Clarke, his former trainer. Mr. Clarke was distraught to know that Munion had left the hands of Mara Feld, the person who was to take him as a private owner, but for reasons that are not clear as of this writing, sold him within a very short period of time, either days or maybe a few weeks, at most, and it has been just recently that his fate has become known. Munion was slaughtered. This is so particularly tragic because the timing just didn't work for Munion or anyone who was committed to bringing him to safety. But most particularly, because his saga resonates with the tragedy that continues, and that is that slaughter continues, that despite what some stubbornly and stalwartly continue to claim, that the regulations ARE upheld, that the affidavits ARE in compliance, and the very reason we believed would stall the progress of transport to slaughter, and the very act of slaughter, is a farce and actually devious and conscientious intent of some to disregard the regulations.

Those who are in the slaughter business maintain that there is compliance with the laws and regulations, particularly in the part of the country where Munion's saga began. It's just unconscionable. But Munion should now be destined to be an example of how these laws are ignored and bypassed, and perhaps will serve to be pivotal in insuring that there must be better policing for compliance. And perhaps as recognition and awareness comes from hearing of his story, maybe more will join the campaign to abolish slaughter once and for all.

There's nothing good about this in any shape or form. But just maybe Munion's story will be pivotal in pushing the bills forward. Maybe our congress will view his example as a shameful illustration of how those in the slaughter business break the laws, to the extent that they are disregarding of the safety of the products consumed by the end users. There is much outcry and fury about inferior products imported from elsewhere to the US, maybe our congress will note that the slaughter industry knowingly and with forethought allows products to be transported to Canada and US for use in Europe and Asia without regard for the safety of the product. It is shameful, humiliating and an embarrassment, on top of the horror and revulsion we feel knowing that as badly as we want to protect them, our horses are killed even as I write.

Perhaps Munion will be the unwitting key to the end of slaughter. I dearly hope so. We'll tell his story to everyone. We'll make our elected representatives listen even though they claim they have, but they haven't acted as promised. We'll make sure that Munion's death will not be in vain. It just breaks my heart that he wasn't found, most particularly because Mara Feld had the option to return him to Mr. Clarke when the realization came to her that she couldn't keep him. So many share the heartache of Mr. Clarke and his family. We all wanted such a different outcome. We won't let Munion be forgotten, and we will honor him by pledging to amp up our war against the slaughter industry, foreign and those who endeavor to open plants here in the US, like Sue Wallis and her sidekick, Dave Duquette, Tom Lenz and the very deceitful entities that claim to have horses' welfare at heart.

Rest in peace, sweet Munion. I'm so sorry that you received the worst betrayal of all. You deserved so much more.

Cheryl Jones
Lakewood, CO