

**U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

Valley Meat Company, LLC	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	
TOM VILSACK, Secretary	)	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	)	
1400 Independence Ave., SW	)	12-CV-1083-JCG-CG
Washington, DC 20250	)	
	)	
AL ALMANZA, Administrator,	)	
Food Safety and Inspection Service	)	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	)	
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 331-E	)	
Washington, DC 20250	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	
	)	

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**AFFIDAVIT OF SILVIA CHRISTEN IN SUPPORT OF  
SOUTH DAKOTA STOCKGROWERS ASSOCIATION'S  
MOTION TO INTERVENE**

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STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA      )  
  ) ss.  
COUNTY OF PENNINGTON      )

I, Silvia Christen, being duly sworn upon oath hereby depose and state as follows:

1. I am over the age of 18 years, and have personal knowledge of the facts contained herein.
2. My address is 426 Saint Joseph Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701.

3. I am the Executive Director of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association (“SDSGA”).
4. SDSGA is a grassroots, non-profit organization of independent livestock producers dedicated to the continued success and viability of the domestic livestock industry. Founded in 1893, our mission has remained unchanged, to promote and protect the South Dakota livestock industry. Today, we represent over 1,300 producer-members working to educate the public and promote policy that protects the viability of our ranches and rural communities. SDSGA is registered in the State of South Dakota as a 501(c)(5) corporation.
5. The SDSGA board of directors met on Tuesday, February 12, 2013 in Pierre, South Dakota and voted to become interveners in this case.
6. The SDSGA represents 1,300 ranchers in the state of South Dakota, most of whom own horses in some capacity. Many of them use horses for their daily work on the ranch and raise a few horses each year for sale either to the cull market or for use as working horses. Several of our members also raise a number of horses for the sole purpose of selling them. All of our members care for their horses and are strong advocates for humane treatment of livestock.
7. Our Association’s membership depends on a strong horse market, including a strong slaughter market for these animals from an economic standpoint but also from a humane care stand point. We have seen the market collapse completely to the point that it has created economic hardships for those producers who can no longer sell their horses, let alone cover the cost of raising and caring for the animals. This has also left many of our producers unable to move old, non-working, and other horses towards slaughter in a humane and cost effective way resulting in more horses being abandoned, or euthanized.
8. SDSGA has existed since 1893 and has always represented the interest of the horse owners who are a part of our association. The horse slaughter issue particularly has been an ongoing item of interest for our members as we supported efforts to address shipping and slaughter practices, funding of USDA inspectors at the plants, and work to promote science based practices for handling all livestock from birth to slaughter.
9. USDA FSIS has previously, and continues to have, written procedures in place for how to humanely slaughter horses. When done properly, which can be verified by inspection, there are protections in place for how horses are to be transported to slaughter, handled while being moved through

facilities, killed, and processed to meet the most humane standards. We, the producers who care for these animals, feel comfortable with the measures and standards that are in place in a correctly managed slaughter facility.

10. We believe that horse meat is safe for human consumption. Many nations and cultures around the world have eaten and continue to eat horse meat with no adverse affects. While we do acknowledge that some horses are treated with medications that may conflict with safe human consumption, standards similar to those used in other meat slaughter industries can and should be used to dismiss this concern.
11. The slaughter of horses has been done previously, and is done in many other countries without any impact to society. The consumer will still be able to determine if they want to purchase horse meat, and that meat will be slaughtered in a USDA inspected facility. The quality of our food supply will not be compromised. Environmentally, we feel the same way. Proper safeguards are in place and if standards are met there is no reason to be concerned about the environmental impact of a horse slaughter facility.
12. The ability of the Valley Meat plant to slaughter horses will result in higher market prices for horses and an incentive for producers to sell their horses to humane ends. The economic impact to our members is substantial. Additionally, the producers in our area are usually growing multiple species for commercial production which compete for grazing on their ranches. Some producers are finding it very difficult to meet the grazing needs of their horses in their efforts to expand their cattle and sheep production. Horse owners who are unable to find enough land to graze horses often resort to very poor conservation practices and overgraze in order to keep costs low and avoid losing money on their horse business.
13. FSIS's failure to inspect Valley Meat plant will remove the market incentive and also make it increasingly difficult for other horse slaughter facilities to re-open in the United States. The financial burden that has been realized by not opening these facilities is very real to our producers. They will be burdened with lack of income from their horse sales, increased shipping costs to international slaughter facilities and the financial costs associated with keeping and disposing of horses that have little or no market value.
14. The impacts of a delay due to the NEPA process is similar to the impact of not having FSIS inspect the plants at all. The financial costs of keeping the animals continues to multiply especially this year as many producers are facing a drought, limited feed supply, and extremely high cost of

purchasing alternative feed for these animals. The delay due to a NEPA process is unnecessary and will only result in more economic losses to our producers.

15. The same scientific basis that does not require NEPA at beef, pork or poultry processing facilities should be sufficient argument against needing to complete them for a horse slaughter facility.
16. The social and economic impacts to the local community would be similar in any rural community. The lack of jobs, the lack of economic activity due to the lack of jobs and the increased burden to social programs like medical facilities, schools, food pantries, etc would be felt immediately. If Valley Meats is not able to open in a timely manner, many of the potential employees will likely find other means of employment or move out of the area. The local tax base will likely suffer and it will be made more difficult for the community to support and recruit a workforce in the future.
17. If Valley Meats is not able to open, and therefore limits other horse slaughter facilities from opening, our rural community of South Dakota will feel the impact. We have seen an increased number of abandoned horses and even prosecution for mistreatment or abuse of horses usually due to malnutrition. The cost of caring for these abandoned animals falls to the local taxpayers and is a substantial cost.
18. With the recent, severe drought in South Dakota, horse owners are struggling to find enough pasture which often results in severe over grazing and costs to the environment. Those horse owners also struggle to purchase adequate, alternative feed for these animals, but due to the collapsed horse market, they are unable to sell the animals or find other care for the animals. Those ranchers who are “stuck” with these animals often face such an economic burden to their operations that it severely limits their ability to hire any employees on their operations, and also reduces their ability to make other financial purchases or support their local economies. We have seen this in our area, and will continue to see more if the horse market does not improve.
19. There will be a huge economic burden if horse slaughter facilities are not opened. The cost of keeping a horse, the lack of market price for horses, and the burden to the local tax base of caring for abandoned horses makes a substantial impact.
20. There is no negative environmental impact from horse slaughter facilities. Beef, pork, and poultry processing facilities operate in very similar manners and their environmental impact is limited due to sound, scientific processes for disposing of waste through treatment facilities or

composting which can be regulated and monitored to stop any adverse environmental impacts from being realized.

- 21. The horses that are currently being euthanized on our ranches and in our rural communities are often not being composted or disposed of properly. Disposing of these animals through slaughter allows for oversight of the disposal and management of the environmental impact, which is currently not occurring.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.

DATED this \_\_\_ day of February, 2013.

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Silvia Christen, Executive Director  
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA     )  
   ) ss.  
COUNTY OF PENNINGTON    )

The foregoing instrument was subscribed and sworn under oath before me by Silvia Christen, this \_\_\_\_ day of February, 2013.

Witness my hand and official seal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public  
My Commission Exp:\_\_\_\_\_