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### **Humane Handling Guidelines for Horses now Available**

To reinforce the importance of caring for horses at all stages of their lives, the Alberta Equine Welfare Group has issued standards for the acceptable care and handling of horses to be transported.

The purpose of the new booklet is to provide horse owners and handlers with a decision making tool to ensure only fit horses are transported. It is unacceptable **by law** for unfit animals – those that are sick, injured, aged, fatigued or would suffer unduly if not handled properly – to be transported. Clear, defined guidelines have been developed by the industry stating what is humanely acceptable to load on a truck and what is not.

“The Horse Welfare Report (issued March 2008) identified the need to focus on improving the conditions of horses in the marketing system. Studies done by the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) and the Alberta SPCA and by Dr. T. Grandin point to original owner induced neglect as a core equine welfare concern,” said Bill desBarres, of the Alberta Equine Welfare Group and board member of AFAC, representing the Alberta Equestrian Federation. Dr. Temple Grandin noted from an observational study, *“77% of the horses with welfare problems were a direct result of owner neglect prior to shipment to meat plants.”*

“We looked at the success of similar guidelines distributed by other livestock organizations in Alberta to producers, meat inspectors, peace officers, auction market staff, truckers and veterinarians. Now we have standards for horses and our goal,” emphasized desBarres, “is to reduce the number of unfit horses entering the market system.”

These guidelines meet CFIA policy regarding the transport of compromised animals. And, they are endorsed by the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and the Alberta SPCA. *“We support and accept the standards of humane care prepared by the Alberta Equine Welfare Group and will use these standards in the implementation of our enforcement program,”* said Morris Airey, Director of Animal Protection Services, Alberta SPCA.

Provincial horse organizations across Canada under the banner of the newly formed **Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada** will have the opportunity to distribute these guidelines to their members.

To obtain copies contact the Alberta Equestrian Federation at 403-253-4411. The booklet is available at [afac.ab.ca](http://afac.ab.ca), [www.albertaequestrian.com](http://www.albertaequestrian.com) and [www.albertahorseindustry.ca](http://www.albertahorseindustry.ca)

For more information contact Bill desBarres at 1-403-526-1070