

**HB 2127**  
**Public Hearings - June 25, 1998**

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**Thank you:** State Representative Lynch, other members who are supporting his efforts, and the media who has an interest in bringing this situation to the public so that they can understand the horse's plight.

**My Background:** Grew up living on or working on Pennsylvania farms which raised crops and livestock for market (sheep, poultry, cows) and was involved in agriculture-related activities such as 4-H throughout my youth.

Went on to college where my studies were also agriculture-related, and have further pursued a specialty in Equine science.

Also spent the last 25 years of my life dedicated almost entirely to equestrian pursuits and have a long history of riding, coaching, competing, and being involved as a participant or volunteer in many various disciplines within the sport, from the lower backyard levels on up through the higher levels. Because of how serious I was about learning all of the facets of this industry, I have spent many years in the equine industry on farms and also assisting veterinarians while they made farm calls. I also traveled untold miles around the United States, East of the Mississippi. During those trips, I hauled horses myself or was in charge of horses being hauled.

**Photos:**

*Normal horse trailer with 7' roof, tape line shows height of the double-deck roofs (beams lower it further). Disparity between normal horse and normal pony = injury. Divider's purpose.*  
*Normal interior showing head space and normal ramp, showing matting. Air flow.*

**My Purpose for attending:**

I have seen horses loaded on double-decked trucks at auctions in past; saw and heard them crashing and falling down the ramps. I have seen broken legs, downed and moaning animals that were allowed to be trampled by others, etc. Although I tried at that time to stop the situation, I was easily deflected. Like many people of that era, I turned away because there was no one who would listen or control the situation.

Although this was years ago, my peers and colleagues in the equine field have repeatedly told horror stories of continued cruelty to these animals and the extraordinary tolerance of those actions by the Lancaster and Snyder County communities (because of New Holland and Middleburg Horse Sales). Those professionals' own complaints of the sales and trucking industry have been systematically deflected, as well.

I was recently doing some research on HB 2127 to see whether it would really create a legal stance to end the torture these horses go through each week in our state, because of the auctions' allowance of brutal practices and also the commercial trucking industry's perception of livestock handling.

I returned to the auctions to watch and have again been witness to the tolerance of excessively abusive and cruel situations, plus an unregulated effort of out-of-state truckers and foreign-owned slaughter houses to make vast amounts of money by sending horses to kill on double decked trucks that these horses do not fit in. They are injured or killed while making their journey, and are intentionally deprived of food, water and rest for *days* with no human respect to their most basic well-being. Cattle prods are applied with vicious disregard. Although laws against cruelty and water deprivation exist, there is no regard for obeying these laws and so the system proliferates. As a result, the animals suffer mightily every week.

The efforts that HB 2127 makes are a step in the right direction. Having recently spoken to several hundred other Pennsylvania horsemen and women, we applaud your efforts. Like myself, we all want the insanity to stop, and humane efforts to finally begin. We envy the 1981 New York State law which calls for protecting these animals and allows for arrests, convictions, and fines based on the trucker's abuse. New York is even calling for an increase in fines on this issue.

Pennsylvania needs to aggressively follow that path. However, HB 2127 needs several necessary amendments before it will actually work. The professionals of the Equine Placement Network have called your attention to these changes for a reason, and I am proud to join their ranks. I wrote to many of you in my support of this bill and begged you to make every immediate effort to expedite it forward. However, upon studying HB 2127 further, there are several serious loopholes that are glaringly obvious to Pennsylvanians who have actually witnessed this trucking abuse and understand the equine industry.

1) "All horses" not just slaughter-bound.

a) If the term called "Intermediate Handler" is not defined to mean those who gather these animals for slaughter purposes, then I and other *legitimate* horse people could potentially be affected when we ship our ill or injured animals for care. Killer buyers will make every effort to circumvent the law, and will claim that they are taking the horse for treatment when in reality it is slaughter bound. I witnessed this several weeks ago with a downed palomino who would not stand on his painful feet and the killer buyer claimed he was taking it to NY for treatment. He should never have brought the horse to this state in the first place in that condition.

b) HB 2127 absolutely MUST state that each violation must be per horse, per offense. Killer buyers will cram the doors shut on as many horses as they can possibly stuff into their trailers. To do this to these animals, and then have the fine argued down to \$50 for the full truckload, is a travesty.

c) The "Fit to Travel" certificate is a MUST. There are two reasons:

REASON A) Our stolen horses might now have an opportunity to be identified. I have spoken to horsemen up and down the East Coast, and was present at a Pennsylvania sale one recent day when a neighbor's pet horse apparently walked onto a kill truck. It had been stolen some years before and she had frantically traced it through a New York sale to PA. By the time she sorted out the deceptions, the mare had vanished without a way to trace her at the slaughterhouse. We do nothing to approach this problem, yet New Jersey just announced that it is actually on it's way to a 5-year jail term for pet theft.

REASON B) An on-site *equine* veterinarian will then be obligated to approve only those horses who are capable of making the brutal journeys that these truckers subject them to. Currently the truckers going to Canada stop off in another state by the side of the highway, to collect a blanket health certificate from small animal vets so they can cross the Canadian boarder.

It will also stop the shipment of the baby foals that get trampled enroute and the blind horses who can not defend themselves or see the doors and ramps to load. It will also stop those who are so emaciated they can barely stand, the pregnant mares about to foal, and those who are full of cancer and infectious diseases which are allowed to go for human food, despite laws forbidding this. This is allowed here every single week.

This past week I witnessed two mules who were suffering from a condition known as "tying up" and could only stand on the edge of their rear hooves because of intense muscle spasms in their bodies. Both were obviously in extreme pain and distress, and needed immediate veterinary care. I also saw a three-legged crippled horse who could only hobble. He was allowed to go, because the current PA cruelty law - stating that "all four feet must be able to bear weight" was considered acceptable, since he had finally gotten exhausted enough to place his distressed foot flat on the floor. This happens every week. Foundered horses ( a painful foot condition) still try to bear their weight on all four limbs and lie down all

the time to relieve their pain, and are still forced to travel. Colicked horses are allowed to go. A normal horseman does not allow this and will put these horses down. Pennsylvania horsemen do not want this, and question why a handful of non-tax paying killer buyers are allowed to be condoned.

Two months ago I witnessed the horror of seeing two Amish animals hidden on a killer truck all day before some one discovered them. One was a three-legged Standardbred buggy horse who had at one time had a racing career. The other was a handsome blonde plowing mule. He had been hidden in the truck since a previous sale two days earlier, and his leg was snapped *cleanly in half*. It flopped uselessly. *He* also put *that* leg flat on the floor, despite it's inability to do anything more than flop about. That killer buyer claimed he had no idea that it was broken, that he liked and did not want to ship injured horses, that he did not know how the Standardbred had gotten ON his trailer, and that he was only going 6 hours away. I helped kill those two horses that day and felt only relief for them and anger at the agriculture and trucking communities that allow and encourage this system, and the complete avoidance of obeying the current cruelty laws in PA. If a legitimate horseman had shipped those animals, he would be prosecuted for cruelty. In this specific case, there has been no action against either the trucker or the farmers who did this to these animals and then tried to make meat money off of them.

☞ And finally, a personal request from all horsemen and women I have talked to:

GIVE THESE ANIMALS WATER!!!

I recently spent some time researching the Domestic Animal Act (which requires watering these animals, by law) and the agriculture material put out by Penn State to both the general community and the agriculture students. Their books and pamphlets are adamant about the fact that water deprivation is not safe nor reasonable, and that 5% of a body weight loss creates colics and 10% can be fatal. 10% is only about 20 gallons. That is only about four buckets of water. A horse will drink this amount in a day, and suck down even more under stressful conditions.

Yet these auctions and truckers willfully deny the animals water until they die, sometimes right at the sales. They get thrown on top of other animals in the "dead pile". They call this "mortality" and claim that some mortality is expected in shipping animals to market. There are studies proclaiming that this is an OK practice in agriculture and shipping, but any livestock manager knows that studies can be skewed and that this is nonsense.

You can't tell me or any other horseman across the United States that. We can take hundreds of animals to competitions and none of them die there. We take every precaution to make sure they get water every few hours while traveling. Loss of water intake is our greatest fear.

To watch the horses desperately seeking water when they have spent days on the road coming into PA from other sales, and then being denied water all day while here, is simply pure abuse. The ones that suffer the worst are those who then are forced to travel the southern routes in the heat, 1500 miles to Texas and Nebraska. No one that I have ever met in the equine industry finds that to be acceptable. Yet everybody wants you to believe that this is acceptable, so the system can continue unabated.

Horses obviously do not fit in double-deckers, and the truckers simply want to have a faster turn-around times while shipping all types of animals without regard to their actual physical ability to travel. By making these changes, the killer buyers won't be losing significant amounts of money by not hauling the animals already in trouble, and it is only human decency to protect them or euthanise them rather than torture them further.

As horse men and women of Pennsylvania, we demand a change in our current laws and implore you to immediately make our requested changes in HB 2127. The professionals in the Equine Placement Network have spelled them out. You have the power to write these changes in, and your silence is acceptance. Otherwise you shackle us with this tragedy. I can now take questions that you may have.