



CANADIAN MEAT COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES VIANDES DU CANADA

Horse Meat Production in Canada

How can Canadian consumers be sure that the meat they are buying is exactly what is stated on the package (i.e. if it is labelled beef, then it only contains beef, not horse meat or some other meat)?

In Canada, it is illegal to sell food in a manner that is misleading or deceptive. Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspectors are present in all federally registered slaughter and processing establishments to verify that meat products are produced in accordance with Canadian law. In addition to visual inspection, the CFIA tests domestic and imported products to verify that meat products are indeed the stated species. Compliance for both domestic and imported products is very high.

The CFIA is aware that in 2013, horse meat was discovered in some otherwise labelled meat products in Europe. However, Canadian consumers should note two important facts. First, Canada does not currently permit beef imports from Europe. Second, in Canada, the potential use of horse meat as a substitute for beef would be unlikely. There are only four federally registered establishments that perform horse slaughter, and most of this meat is exported. In addition, the economic situation in Canada is different from Europe given that fresh beef here costs less than horse meat.

What process does meat inspection follow in Canada to prevent the wrongful inclusion of horse meat?

All food sold in Canada must comply with the Food and Drugs Act, the Food and Drug Regulations, and the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act and Regulations. The Food and Drugs Act prohibits the sale of food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive. CFIA inspection and testing of domestic and imported products verifies that meat is in compliance with Meat Inspection Act and Food and Drugs Act requirements.

Meat that is made in Canadian establishments and moves inter-provincially (across provincial borders) is produced under CFIA inspection oversight. CFIA inspectors verify compliance at these establishments. The CFIA also carries out spot testing to confirm compliance with the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations which prohibit the sale of food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive.

Canada only imports meat from countries with an approved meat inspection system that verifies for label compliance in the same manner as described above.

With regard to the situation in Europe, Canada does not import beef from Europe, so none of the implicated meat products were sold here.



Has horse meat ever been detected in otherwise labelled product in Canada?

A CFIA monitoring and sampling program confirms the species included in domestic and imported raw and ready-to-eat meat products match the product information provided on the label or Official Meat Inspection Certificate. Sampling is done when the species cannot be confirmed by visual inspection, such as for ground meat products.

Since 2007, the CFIA has tested a total of 39 imported meat products to verify species accuracy. Only one product included a meat that was not declared (pork egg roll contained both pork and poultry); domestically the compliance level ranged from 95 to 100% over that same period of time.

Horse meat labelled as a different type of meat has never been detected in Canada.

Burger-loving Canadians can rest easy—Canada’s most popular frozen and fast food hamburger patties do not contain horsemeat, according to testing carried out by Ontario researchers.

Following reports from Europe of horsemeat found in hamburger patties and frozen lasagna, University of Guelph researchers at the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario (BIO) used advanced DNA testing to examine 15 sources of Canadian hamburger meat in late January of 2013.

Six of the sources tested were cooked and nine frozen.

The six cooked hamburgers tested for DNA from horsemeat and other sources include A&W Mama Burger, Burger King’s Whopper, Dairy Queen’s FlameThrower, Harvey’s Original, McDonald’s Big Mac, and Wendy’s Bacon Double Cheeseburger. All were 100 percent beef.

The uncooked, frozen hamburger patties tested include Beef Steakettes (Schneiders), Lick’s Homeburgers, M&M Meat Shops Supreme Homestyle Beef Burgers, No Name Beef Burgers (Loblaws), Outlaw Beef Burgers (Schneiders), President’s Choice Thick and Juicy Beef Burgers, and Webers Beef Burgers.

Fresh lean ground beef in a tube (Better Beef -- Cargill) and Food Basics fresh lean ground beef were also tested.

How many Horse Slaughter Facilities are in Canada?



There are only four federally registered establishments that perform horse slaughter in Canada- two in Quebec and two in Alberta. Over 85% of Canada's horse meat is exported. There are an estimated 500 people employed across Canada in Canada's horse meat processing sector.

What are the export markets for Canadian horsemeat?

Canada exported 17.7 million kilograms of horsemeat valued at almost \$90 million of horsemeat in 2012 to 15 different countries. The major markets were Switzerland, Japan, France, Belgium and Kazakhstan. The average value of exported horsemeat sales was \$5.08 per kilogram. The average value of exported beef last year was \$4.46 per kilogram and the average value of pork was \$2.69. Last year Canada shipped approximately 1.2 billion kilograms of pork and 271 million kilograms of beef.

How many horses are slaughtered each year in Canada?

In 2011, 89,000 horses were slaughtered in Canada. This compares with over 20 million hogs and 2.6 million cattle.

How is horsemeat different from beef?

Horsemeat is much redder in colour than beef- some call it a wine red. And, horsemeat is very lean- about ½ the fat content of beef. In parts of Quebec, medical doctors recommend eating horsemeat to those who are iron deficient. Horsemeat is a delicacy in many countries. It is high in iron- 50% higher than beef. It is also tender, which is why it is a preferred meat for rare steaks or tartare.

How important is Canada's meat industry?

The meat and poultry processing industry is the largest component of Canada's food processing sector with annual revenues valued at over \$24 billion and total employment of almost 70,000 people. It is the 11th most important manufacturing sector in the country after such industries as motor vehicles, wood products and petroleum products.

The meat processing industry includes over 400 establishments, providing valued jobs and economic activity in both rural and urban settings, particularly in rural Canada. The industry is active in virtually every part of the country, with major concentrations of firms located in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Québec. Canada's meat processing industry adds value to the live animals born and raised on Canadian farms, providing a critical market outlet and supporting the viability of thousands of livestock farmers.



Canada is home to many successful Canadian family-owned meat processing facilities, some of which are owned by Canadian farmers. Other large meat processors are publically traded and operate in many countries around the world.

We at the Canadian Meat Council have a vision that Canada is trusted as a world leader in the provision of safe and wholesome meat. Last year Canada exported \$1.2 billion of beef and \$3.2 billion of pork to over 150 different countries around the world.

We also exported approximately \$83 million worth of horse meat to some very sophisticated and demanding overseas markets such as Japan, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Kazakhstan.

Is Canadian horsemeat safe to eat?

Industry is responsible for making sure that all meat sold in Canada is safe, as required by the Food and Drugs Act.

Is phenylbutazone (“bute”) permitted for use in horses?

Phenylbutazone is a pain reliever and anti-inflammatory commonly used to treat lameness in horses. It belongs to the class of drugs called “non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.”

Health Canada regulates the use of veterinary drugs in Canada. Phenylbutazone is approved by Health Canada to be used in horses but is not approved for use in food-producing animals (including horses slaughtered for human consumption).

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has zero tolerance for phenylbutazone in food.

What does the CFIA do to verify that there are no phenylbutazone residues in horse meat?

The CFIA performs daily inspections in all federally registered meat establishments. This is done to verify that the operator is producing meat products that are manufactured in accordance with federal food safety rules.

The Agency also has a monitoring program to randomly test meat for the presence of pesticides, environmental contaminants and drug residues. This monitoring program is based on international scientific standards as outlined by the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization. The testing is conducted at a frequency to detect trends in drug use violations. When the CFIA detects results that are of concern, sampling frequency can be increased.



In addition to randomly sampling horse meat for chemical residues, the CFIA conducts targeted testing based on clinical observation of animals, before stunning and slaughter.

The CFIA employs veterinarians and supervised, trained inspectors in each horse slaughter plant to identify any animal that, based on its appearance or history, may have been treated with phenylbutazone. The meat from these animals may be held until testing is performed and no residues are found.

Animals are also examined post-slaughter for signs of conditions such as arthritis, which can indicate they may have been treated with phenylbutazone.

What does the CFIA's testing show?

Since 2002, the CFIA has been regularly testing horse meat for phenylbutazone. Results show a very high compliance rate for phenylbutazone residues.

Canada's equipment and testing methods are among the most sensitive in the world and currently allow us to detect chemical residues in food at the level of parts per trillion.

Do other countries test horse meat imported from Canada?

Other countries, including Japan and European Union countries, do their own testing of horse meat imported from Canada. Canada would be informed if any food safety issues were identified by these importing countries.

What other safeguards are in place to verify that there are no phenylbutazone residues in horse meat?

As an additional safeguard, in July 2010, the CFIA made it mandatory for every horse (domestic or imported) presented for slaughter in Canadian federally registered equine facilities to have a record of all vaccinations and medications given in the previous six months. This is referred to as the Equine Information Document.

The Equine Information Document is required under the Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures. Each document must be reviewed and signed by a CFIA veterinarian.

Horses presented for slaughter in Canada with incomplete Equine Information Documents are prevented from being slaughtered for human consumption.

What happens if the CFIA detects phenylbutazone in horse meat?

Industry is responsible for taking corrective action if phenylbutazone is detected in horse meat. The CFIA has a range of enforcement options -- including product destruction,



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recall and licence suspension -- to ensure that industry takes effective action in response to the residue findings.