NM AG: Horse Slaughter 'Barbaric,' Illegal

JERI CLAUSING, Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico Attorney General Gary King, who has been a vocal opponent of plans by a southeastern New Mexico company to resume domestic horse slaughter, says state law could prohibit the operation.

In an opinion issued Monday, King says the slaughter of horses with certain drugs in their system would be a violation of the state's adulterated food act. Those drugs, he says, would include an anti-inflammatory commonly found in racehorses, and medications used to treat bacterial, parasitic and viral infections.

Opponents of the application by the plant, which would become the first horse slaughterhouse to operate in the country since 2007, hailed the ruling.

"Slaughtering horses for human consumption is barbaric, inhumane and unsafe for consumers, and Attorney General King is right to deem the practice illegal under state law. Killing horses for their meat in New Mexico — or anywhere else in the U.S. — is clearly a misguided enterprise."

But Blair Dunn, the attorney representing Valley Meat Co. of Roswell in its fight to get U.S. Department of Agriculture approval for the operation, said the opinion "doesn't really do anything."

Dunn said the opinion appeared to be nothing but politics by King, who has announced he is seeking the Democratic nomination to run against Republican Gov. Susana Martinez, who has also been vocal in her opposition to plans to convert Valley Meat Co. from a cattle plant to a horse slaughterhouse.

"And it's not even good politics," Dunn said. "This has the potential to have impact elsewhere. There is not an animal sector that does not ... give antibiotics. If you were to apply this standard to the dairy industry, you would shut down the entire dairy industry in this state. This is reckless and dangerous."

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