

SPEAK UP FOR HORSES CREATED

N. KENTUCKY WOMEN AIM TO STOP SLAUGHTER

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COVINGTON -- When Paula Drake sees a horse, she thinks of Black Beauty or My Friend Flicka.

Too often, however, Drake and friend Shelly Price also think of the double-decker cattle trucks that they say haul horses through Kentucky to foreign-owned horse slaughterhouses in Illinois and Texas. "We hold (horses) in high esteem," Drake said.

"They deserve better from us."

The Northern Kentucky residents are poised to do something about it. Along with friend Ginger Rood, they created Speak Up for Horses, a charity that they hope will help save some of the estimated 90,000 horses slaughtered every year for human consumption. "We want to develop an equine education center to try and solve some of the problems that cause the unwanted horse," Price said. "We also want to do some rescue and rehoming."

The friends began the group after meeting in 2004 at the site of a cattle-truck crash in southeastern Indiana. Drawn together by a compassion for animals, they say they're tired of a practice that they feel is cruel.

The group is encouraged by the Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, a measure co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-Ky.) that has already been passed by the House and is waiting for a vote in the Senate.

The proposal has been met with opposition from cattle groups and ranchers who say slaughtering the horses is a humane way of preventing overpopulation. They also fear that passing the bill would create a "slippery slope" that could end with a ban on beef.

Drake and Price say too many healthy, productive horses are being slaughtered.

"They're not old, broken-down horses," Price said. "There's young horses. Healthy, pregnant mares go to slaughter."

Their dream is to one day open a farm in Northern Kentucky that could host school field trips while helping educate the public about the horses.

"You have to look at society," Price said. "We don't eat horses here in the United States. There are countries that eat dogs and cats. We don't."