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Attn: **Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis**  
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Freiburg i. Br., 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019

### **Suspension of horsemeat import from Argentina / stolen horses**

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

Further to our letter from 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019, in which we call for a suspension of horsemeat import from Uruguay and Argentina, we would like to inform you about two recent incidents that took place in Argentina involving criminal activities. There is new evidence of illegal trade with stolen horses and severe animal cruelty in the supply chain of live horses for slaughter.

On 13 August, we were informed that a truck with horses belonging to dealer named Hernan Arbeo was confiscated by the police on the way to the EU-approved slaughterhouse Infriba in Mar del Plata. We immediately sent a team to Argentina to investigate and document this case. Out of the 32 horses on board the truck, at least eight had been stolen. As the police has no place for the horses, they are now at the slaughterhouse Infriba, several still waiting for their owners. Their fate is unclear. One horse has died in the meantime.

While our team was in Argentina, we were informed about another case of illegal trade of horses, involving animal cruelty. More than 400 malnourished horses were discovered on a field in Ezeiza near Buenos Aires, 25 of them were dead, four were dying. These horses belonged to a dealer named Raul Onorato, who is the father-in-law of Hernan Arbeo, and his son. On 22 August, the rural police confiscated all these horses and with the support of several NGOs tried to save the dying horses and brought food and water for the surviving ones. Here you can download a rough cut of our video footage, including an interview with the mayor of Ezeiza and the security minister of Buenos Aires: <http://mbf.co/M4bAb4>

On the day of rescue, one horse was identified as stolen. Since then, the horses are shut off from the public. Many horse owners want to check if their stolen horses are in the pens, but are not yet allowed in. They are still waiting for the permission from the judge.

Raul Onorato has a long history of dealing with stolen horses. In 2013, numerous stolen horses were delivered by Onorato to the EU-approved slaughterhouse Lamar located in Mercedes. We travelled to Argentina to interview horse owners, policemen, veterinarians, lawyers, etc.<sup>1</sup> Since 2016, Raul Onorato is under house arrest, wearing an electronic ankle band. However, he and his family members continue to deliver horses, including stolen ones, to EU-approved slaughterhouses.

Below you will see a list of media reports about the recent confiscation of the horses in Ezeiza and about Onorato's criminal history. The past cases have shown the involvement of members of the police and of the veterinary authority SENASA, who had helped Onorato forge documents. In the recent case, it can also be assumed that he has support within these institutions and/or of political stakeholders.

The report of the EU Commission's audit in Argentina in November/December 2018 mentioned shortcomings regarding the traceability of horses and referred to a new legal provision, entering into force on 4 March 2019 and aiming at improving traceability. However, the current events clearly show that this new legislation is not able to prevent stolen horses from entering the supply chain of slaughter horses. Therefore, we urgently ask the European Commission to remove Argentina from the list of third countries from which import of horsemeat is permitted, as the country cannot guarantee compliance with, or equivalence to, the applicable EU requirements regarding traceability.

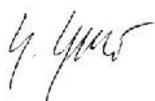
We will send you our detailed investigation report at a later time.

We are looking forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



York Ditzfurth  
Chairman AWF



Sabrina Gurtner  
Project Manager AWF



Stephanie Ghislain  
Project Leader, Trade & Animal Welfare  
Eurogroup for Animals

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<sup>1</sup> This is the link to our documentary film from 2013 (in German): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg\\_ltiC4llo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg_ltiC4llo)

## **Annex: Media reports about Raul Onorato / stolen horses for slaughter**

August 2019

<https://serviciodenoticias.net/impactantes-imagenes-de-maltrato-animal-caballos-muertos-y-desnutridos/>

[www.eldiariosur.com/san-vicente/2019/8/26/quien-es-raul-onorato-el-dueno-del-campo-del-horror-de-ezeiza-25915.html?fbclid=IwAR1CeOssH5etJUEinSkDEOsihTMKwweh8uy7ETCayHM8GoTWFqv6GCNiitE](http://www.eldiariosur.com/san-vicente/2019/8/26/quien-es-raul-onorato-el-dueno-del-campo-del-horror-de-ezeiza-25915.html?fbclid=IwAR1CeOssH5etJUEinSkDEOsihTMKwweh8uy7ETCayHM8GoTWFqv6GCNiitE)

[https://tn.com.ar/policiales/el-dueno-de-el-campo-del-horror-tiene-antecedentes-por-robo-de-caballos\\_988925](https://tn.com.ar/policiales/el-dueno-de-el-campo-del-horror-tiene-antecedentes-por-robo-de-caballos_988925)

[www.infobae.com/sociedad/policiales/2019/08/22/maltrato-animal-encontraron-mas-de-400-caballos-desnutridos-y-25-muertos-en-un-campo-en-ezeiza/?fbclid=IwAR2e-M18QGkfMt\\_MXiTzQtYG44AtvLVPJ72cAeVrEI0BG\\_POYm\\_C3CsCPXk](http://www.infobae.com/sociedad/policiales/2019/08/22/maltrato-animal-encontraron-mas-de-400-caballos-desnutridos-y-25-muertos-en-un-campo-en-ezeiza/?fbclid=IwAR2e-M18QGkfMt_MXiTzQtYG44AtvLVPJ72cAeVrEI0BG_POYm_C3CsCPXk)

[www.infobae.com/sociedad/policiales/2019/08/23/maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-investigacion-la-trama-detras-de-los-400-caballos-desnutridos/](http://www.infobae.com/sociedad/policiales/2019/08/23/maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-investigacion-la-trama-detras-de-los-400-caballos-desnutridos/)

[www.clarin.com/sociedad/rescatan-400-caballos-desnutridos-maltratados-campo-ezeiza\\_0\\_mvRomO1bD.html](http://www.clarin.com/sociedad/rescatan-400-caballos-desnutridos-maltratados-campo-ezeiza_0_mvRomO1bD.html)

[www.lanoticia1.com/noticia/desgarrador-maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-hay-unos-25-caballos-muertos-y-rescataron-otros-420-de-un-116488.html?fbclid=IwAR3nglUNqrZARON9ZkLNhTLERp5Gx7jJYefGYj-XeeLI9K565w\\_4HBwArSA](http://www.lanoticia1.com/noticia/desgarrador-maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-hay-unos-25-caballos-muertos-y-rescataron-otros-420-de-un-116488.html?fbclid=IwAR3nglUNqrZARON9ZkLNhTLERp5Gx7jJYefGYj-XeeLI9K565w_4HBwArSA)

[https://tn.com.ar/sociedad/maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-rescataron-420-caballos-desnutridos\\_988565?fbclid=IwAR1fDUFOllIHtcyo1Z2do7NYIZ4\\_xVgwRadFSuOd8tCnTIWYzBGuTiFQSG8](https://tn.com.ar/sociedad/maltrato-animal-en-ezeiza-rescataron-420-caballos-desnutridos_988565?fbclid=IwAR1fDUFOllIHtcyo1Z2do7NYIZ4_xVgwRadFSuOd8tCnTIWYzBGuTiFQSG8)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOW67bf5LYI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOW67bf5LYI)

November 2016

[www.larazondechivilcoy.com.ar/locales/2016/11/17/tres-detenedos-reiterados-casos-abigeatos-zona-82456.html](http://www.larazondechivilcoy.com.ar/locales/2016/11/17/tres-detenedos-reiterados-casos-abigeatos-zona-82456.html)

February 2013

[www.diariopopular.com.ar/policiales/hallan-frigorifico-caballos-robados-que-iban-ser-faenados-n147877](http://www.diariopopular.com.ar/policiales/hallan-frigorifico-caballos-robados-que-iban-ser-faenados-n147877)

May 2002

[www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/cayo-una-poderosa-banda-de-cuatreros-nid401076](http://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/cayo-una-poderosa-banda-de-cuatreros-nid401076)