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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The Unwanted Horse Coalition Releases National Survey Results

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 9, 2009 – The findings from the Unwanted Horse Coalition’s (UHC) *Study on Contributing Factors Surrounding the Unwanted Horse Issue* are now available at www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org. The study is the first of its kind to assess the causes and magnitude of the unwanted horse population in the United States.

Results indicate that the problem of unwanted horses is perceived to be growing on many fronts. More than 90% of participants believe the number of unwanted horses, as well as those neglected and abused, is increasing. Almost all participants (87%) indicate that in the past year, the issue of unwanted horses has become “a big problem,” compared with only 22% who said the problem was important three years ago. Respondents also report that the number of horses being euthanized is increasing.

In light of one of the worst economic downturns in U.S. history, the economy is considered to be a significant contributor to the unwanted horse problem. The closing of the nation’s processing facilities, changes in breed demand/indiscriminate breeding, as well as the high costs of euthanasia and carcass disposal are also cited by respondents as major contributors.

Regarding placement options for unwanted horses, 63% of equine rescue/retirement facilities polled report they are at near or full capacity and, on average, turn away 38% of the horses brought to them. Capacity is clearly the issue in that as many horses stay for life at the facilities as are adopted out.

Survey respondents believe the top solutions for solving the problem of unwanted horses are to educate owners to purchase and own responsibly, increase the ability of private rescue and retirement facilities to care for unwanted horses, reopen the U.S. processing plants, and increase options and resources for euthanizing and disposing of unwanted horses.

“One of the highlights of the survey is the willingness by all respondents to resolve the unwanted horse problem,” said Tom R. Lenz, DVM, chair of the UHC. “We believe these findings will be useful in identifying common ground for all interested groups and

aid us in developing solutions that will have a profound and lasting impact on the lives of unwanted horses and the horse industry at large.”

The survey was conducted from November 2008 to January 2009 by an independent market research company. More than 23,000 horse owners, equine industry stakeholders and non-horse owners participated. For more information, contact Julia Andersen, UHC director, at (202) 296-4031 or jandersen@horsecouncil.org.

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The Unwanted Horse Coalition

The mission of the Unwanted Horse Coalition is to reduce the number of unwanted horses and improve their welfare through education and the efforts of organizations committed to the health, safety and responsible care and disposition of these horses. The UHC grew out of the Unwanted Horse Summit, which was organized by the American Association of Equine Practitioners and held in conjunction with the American Horse Council's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in April 2005. The summit was held to bring key stakeholders together to start a dialogue on the unwanted horse in America. Its purpose was to develop consensus on the most effective way to work together to address the issue. In June 2006, the UHC was folded into the AHC and now operates under its auspices.