

## Horses on Japanese Plates

Horse meat will remain part of Japanese cuisine despite US ban on horse slaughter

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Tokyo: Japan will keep horse meat on its plates, despite US moves to ban the slaughter of horses, as it receives an ample supply from Canada and South America, an official said on Friday. The US House of Representatives voted on Thursday to ban the killing of horses for human consumption. Some 90,000 horses were slaughtered last year with almost all the meat exported to Japan, France or Belgium.

But in Japan, where horse sashimi is a regional delicacy, only 735 of the 8,800 tonnes of horse meat imported last year came from the United States, the agriculture ministry said.

"Japanese imports of horse meat are unaffected by the US vote because first of all Japan does not import that much from the United States," agriculture ministry official Hidetoshi Akinaga said.

"Japan's main trade partners for horse meat are Canada, Brazil and Argentina," he said.

The three countries together account for 82 percent of Japan's imports of horse meat, which is seen as a lean alternative to beef and also used in pet food.

Another 7,123 tonnes of horse meat is also produced domestically, which accounts for only 0.2 percent of Japan's output of all meat. The US House of Representatives voted 263-146 to ban the slaughter of horses in an emotionally charged campaign by animal rights activists and horse lovers supported by celebrities such as country music legend Willie Nelson and Hollywood star Clint Eastwood. But the ban needs to be approved by the Senate and US President George W. Bush's administration has opposed the measure.