

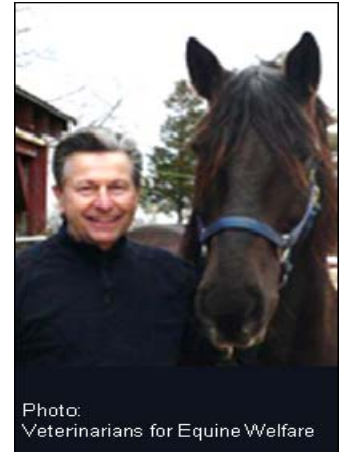
**REVIEW OF HORSES BEING SLAUGHTERED  
AT  
LES VIANDES DE LA PETITE NATION, INC.  
ST. ANDRE-AVELLIN, QUEBEC, CANADA**

About Dr. Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, DVA, DACVA, DACVB:

Dr. Nicholas Dodman is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists, and Professor, Section Head and Program Director of the Animal Behavior Department of Clinical Sciences at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.

He is certified with the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists (ACVA) and the American College of Veterinary Behavior (ACVB). Dr. Dodman is one of the world's most noted and celebrated veterinary behaviorists, and is the author of four best-selling books on animal behavior as well as two textbooks and more than 100 articles and contributions to scientific books and journals.

With his experience in anesthesiology and his intricate knowledge about the anatomy of the brain, Dr. Dodman is a leading specialist, qualified to assess the stunning of horses in a slaughterhouse environment.



**Introduction:**

I was asked by the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition to review horse slaughter footage captured at Les Viandes de la Petite Nation, Inc., on July 13, 2011 and July 14, 2011.

I received the footage on September 6, 2011 and completed the following review on September 16, 2011.

**General Comments:**

Most of the horses killed appeared in moderate to good condition, though some had scars and other injuries and several appeared to have eye infections. Though some horses were relatively calm on entering the stun box, a fair percentage of them appeared nervous or uneasy. I estimate about 20%, appeared terrified, positively shaking with fear and making vain attempts to escape. The clamor and noise of the environment was totally unacceptable and probably contributed to these horses' sense of terror.

The stun box itself was clearly set up for cattle with a caliper-type head/neck restraint to assure cattle's immobility. Clearly, horses would not tolerate such a restraint because of their flighty disposition. This meant that many head-shy or apprehensive horses were moving their heads to-and-fro and presented the operator of the captive bolt pistol (CBP) a moving target.

Since that target – the brain - is approximately the size of a grapefruit and is positioned inside a skull with the dimensions of an office trash can, it is clear that the risk of the operator inaccurately hitting the target is high. The fact that the floor of the stun box was slick, made so by blood and other body fluids, meant that some panicked horses were slipping, sliding, and falling as they tried to propel themselves forward or backwards.

All of these factors contributed to a poor first shot stun percentage, with approximately 40% of horses requiring two or more shots, and one large horse requiring seven shots, to be stunned. Large horses seemed particularly at risk of requiring more than one shot. Whether this is because of the necessity of the operator to reach up high to angle the CBP down or because of the physical size of the horse's skull limiting the reach of the captive bolt is unclear.

Either way, the operator's stance below horse head level was likely another factor contributing to the poor first-time stun percentage. Many horses who required a second or third shot, and some who were only given one shot to the head, retained muscle tone for some time, with some running in place or lurching from side to side, indicating that some level of consciousness was likely still present as they slowly expired.

Though some would claim these movements are reflex, it is by no means certain that they are, and in my professional opinion, I believe that horses should be given the benefit of the doubt. In some cases, horses were clearly conscious despite being shot more than once, only finally succumbing to serial trauma. When a horse that had been properly stunned with one shot was given a second shot for good measure, which did occur occasionally, the (presumably) unconscious horse did not flinch. On the other hand, when semi-conscious horses were given a second shot they lurched forward when the final effective stunning blow was administered.

In certain cases, the operator seemed to shoot the horse further back than he should have, and with the pistol directed at a right angle to the ground. Shooting the horse with the bolt slightly further forward and angled more at 45 degrees would probably have produced more consistent results.

### **Conclusion:**

My final conclusion, after reviewing 150-plus horse slaughters in this series of videos, is that the process was terrifying for most of the horses and, in many cases, horribly inhumane. In my opinion, only a one-shot stun is acceptable and this is, in fact, what Canadian humane slaughter regulations require (Meat Inspection Act - Part III).

It is not acceptable for 40% of horses to require or receive a second shot. At this slaughterhouse, in cases where a second shot was required, most humane standards, in my opinion, were not met.

***The inhumane treatment of horses at Les Viandes de la Petite-Nation must be stopped immediately.***



Nicholas H. Dodman, BVMS, DVA, DACVA, DACVB  
Phone: 508-887-4665  
[Nicholas.Dodman@tufts.edu](mailto:Nicholas.Dodman@tufts.edu)