



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** AHC Member Organizations

**From:** The Unwanted Horse Coalition

**Re:** UHC Releases National Survey Results

**Date:** July 9, 2009

The findings from the Unwanted Horse Coalition's *Study on Contributing Factors Surrounding the Unwanted Horse Issue* are now available on the UHC website at [www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org](http://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.

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 additional information, please contact UHC Director, Julia Andersen, [jandersen@horsecouncil.org](mailto:jandersen@horsecouncil.org) or (202) 296-4031.