

April 12, 2012

The Honorable Susana Martinez
Governor of New Mexico
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 400
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87501

Dear Governor Martinez,

The International Equine Business Association (IEBA) has been formed to protect and promote the horse industry and steps forward to assist equine businesses under attack from dishonest, and unethical, radical animal rights organizations.

Dennis Chavez and Southwest Livestock of Los Lunas have been under scrutiny, and have been vilified on the Internet and in media outlets because of disturbing videos of horses in very poor condition, that were subsequently euthanized. Most of these reports contain biased and speculative information implying that the horses were mistreated by Mr. Chavez.

Missing from the public discussion are any voices from the livestock industry, veterinarians, or experts in animal care and handling. While we wait for the results of the New Mexico Livestock Board's investigation, IEBA has been gathering facts and testimony. The analysis of these findings results in an alarming picture of special interest group stalking and harassment of a legitimate livestock business.

Here are the facts so far as we have been able to ascertain:

- On a busy sale day, March 10th, 2012, when hundreds of horses and hundreds of people were at Southwest Livestock, two activists found four horses in very poor condition.
- According to the activists' own reports they arrived on the scene at 7:19 am.
- It is indisputable that they spent an extended period of time videoing each of these horses from every angle before they reported their condition to anyone.
- They did not show up in the office to report the horses until 2:30 pm.
- The horses were not part of the auction. They were in a separate area.
- The horses in question were in a "hospital pen" with plenty of hay and water, which was carefully framed out of the videos, as were the hundreds of healthy horses in good condition on the premises.
- The video was not released until weeks later when the carcasses had been long disposed of; preventing any examination to determine whether there was foul play.
- Horses in poor condition who are given the kind of feed and care given to every horse

at Southwest Livestock usually recover in 60 to 90 days.

- Mr. Chavez has documentation to prove that he has purchased nearly a million dollars of hay, feed, and veterinary supplies in the past year. His livestock are never without free choice hay, and clean water.
- Practically all of Dennis Chavez's customers are repeat customers, if horses were abused he would soon be out of business, and this is a well-respected and successful operation that has been in business for over forty years.

Dennis Chavez has the support of his neighbors, Native Americans, the entire agriculture industry, and people who understand the realities of livestock and the circle of Life. It is sad that these horses died, but it was not the fault of Mr. Chavez or Southwest Livestock. We do not believe that it was the result of any sort of intentional animal abuse.

It is the position of the IEBA that the fate of these suffering horses, and far too many others, are the direct result of the actions of animal activists who in a misguided attempt to "save horses from slaughter," have instead rendered them worthless, or nearly so, and have condemned good horses to a fate far worse.

Instead of charging Mr. Chavez with negligent mistreatment or animal cruelty, and trying to ruin his business...if these groups really cared about horses they would be honoring and applauding him, as we do, for providing care and sustenance to horses that would otherwise have no chance of survival.

Mr. Chavez, and other hardworking, taxpaying, livestock businesses in New Mexico deserve our support and appreciation for the care and feeding of otherwise doomed horses. They do not deserve the blatant stalking and harassment of out-of-state special interest groups, the negative impact to their ability to conduct business, nor the mental stress and anguish of hate mail and death threats to family members incited by this vicious, uncalled for public vilification.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, and to provide you with documentation of the nationwide scope of the animal rights activist threat to agriculture and our food supply, and the consistent pattern of attack of innocent individuals and businesses. Below are statements provided by Mr. Chavez in regards to this matter, in which he expresses very articulately the attitude and beliefs of the horse industry in particular, and of animal agriculture as a whole.

Sincerely,

Sue Wallis, Chair, United States
International Equine Business Association

CC:
New Mexico Livestock Board
New Mexico Agricultural Organizations

STATEMENTS FROM DENNIS CHAVEZ...

"Our number one concern is the care and condition of all animals, and our concern is as great, or greater, than the concern of those who have brought these accusations. "

"Southwest Livestock receives all kinds of horses in all kinds of conditions. Some are brought to the facility because they have been abandoned. Some are left tied to the fence overnight by anonymous people. Many come off of Indian reservations and other facilities. Some arrive off of trucks and trailers already in sad condition. We do everything in our power to handle horses that arrive in a compromised condition appropriately."

"We have and will continue to fully cooperate with the New Mexico Livestock Board investigation of this incident. We are confident that the political motives behind the complaints will be revealed, and that we will be cleared of any wrong doing."

"Far too many poor horses arrive at this facility and other livestock facilities across the Nation as a result of the poor economy, the drought, and the high price of feed. When they arrive we supply feed, clean water, and care."

"We appreciate the support of the entire livestock industry."