

December 10, 2024

Josh Silverman, Chief Executive Officer  
Etsy, Inc.  
117 Adams St  
Brooklyn, NY 11202

*Via email*

**RE: Requesting removal of horsemeat and ejiao (donkey hide gelatin) products from Etsy**

Dear Mr. Silverman,

We are writing regarding the sale of equine parts for human consumption on Etsy – specifically horsemeat and ejiao (gelatin made from donkey hides). On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute’s supporters nationwide, we urge Etsy to remove such products from its platform in order to uphold animal welfare, better serve consumers, and abide by the company’s commitment to foster a sustainable and responsible marketplace.

It recently came to our attention that an Etsy vendor is selling canned horsemeat (see, for example, the following listings: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1103368026/2-two-horse-stew-fully-cooked-mre-ready> and <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1762279071/2-two-kazy-fully-cooked-mre-ready-to-eat>). The site appears to allow shipping to the United States, which may be in contravention of existing laws and policies. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection service, “horse meat is not allowed to be imported into the United States for human consumption.”<sup>1</sup>

Horse slaughter facilities cannot legally operate in the United States due to provisions passed in annual federal spending bills.<sup>2</sup> Several states have also passed laws prohibiting horse slaughter and the consumption of horsemeat. National polling over the years has consistently shown overwhelming opposition among the American public to butchering horses for food. The welfare problems associated with equine slaughter are well documented; given their physiology and strong fight-or-flight response, properly rendering horses unconscious prior to slaughter can prove uniquely difficult. Footage and images from horse slaughterhouses around the world have revealed horrific conditions and horses violently thrashing their necks in the “kill box” trying to escape.

Ejiao – which results from slaughtering donkeys – is also readily available on Etsy (see, for example, the following listings: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1442484300/e-jiao-jio-1lb-16-oz-donkey-hide-gelatin> and <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1774816617/walnut-e-jiao-gelatin-cake-jio-go>). Increasing demand for ejiao (which is used in cosmetics, supplements, traditional remedies, and foods) is directly tied to the decimation of donkey populations worldwide – a crisis that has cascading effects in communities across the globe as millions rely on these trusted and loyal animals. eBay banned the sale of ejiao on its platform given the significant problems its production entails. African countries in particular have seen the devastating impacts of the trade in donkey

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence between AWI and Food Safety and Inspection Service staff via the agency’s askFSIS form, December 4, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Such provisions have been enacted for each year since Fiscal Year 2014 and for all but two years since 2005.

hides (as well as their own donkey numbers plummet); in February of 2024, the African Union passed a moratorium on slaughtering donkeys to try to stem this tide.

Unfortunately, millions of donkeys are being killed each year to bolster the ejiao industry, and – as their skins are the valuable part – there is little incentive to even ensure their welfare during transport to slaughterhouses. As with horse slaughter, investigations have underscored the suffering that goes on – e.g., wounded animals being beaten, donkeys subjected to unsuccessful stunning attempts. Companies selling ejiao absolutely can and should play a role in clamping down on this inhumane industry.

Etsy’s platform is known for crafts, artisan goods, and handmade designs, so to see listings for horsemeat and ejiao is both shocking and troubling. As noted, these products are linked to serious welfare concerns and in some cases abject cruelty. We appreciate the company’s clear policy when it comes to certain wildlife products, noting that Etsy “may remove animal products at [its] discretion based on an item’s presentation” or if the company “receive[s] notice that it may be in violation of the law” – and that additionally, Etsy “may remove items due to the risk of harm to live, companion, or at-risk animals.” We hope you will adopt a similar policy to protect equines as well.

Especially around the holidays, individuals often look to Etsy to find unique gifts for friends and family. We trust that Etsy will do right by its mission of promoting creativity by pulling these listings that involve selling equine products for human consumption.

Sincerely,

Joanna Grossman, PhD  
Equine Program Director and  
Senior Advisor, Farmed Animal Program  
Animal Welfare Institute