



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Jim Amos, Scout 22

(818) 216-9122

jim@scout22.com

OWNER OF SLAUGHTERHOUSE PLEADS GUILTY FOLLOWING UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION

Investigation That Led to Charges Showed Horrific Violence

CARNEY'S POINT, NJ—(December 19, 2022)— Joseph Merola, the owner of Bravo Packing, Inc., which slaughters cows and horses for animal feed, and has operated for over 60 years (no affiliation with Bravo Pet Foods), has pleaded guilty to a criminal charge stemming from video footage captured by an undercover investigator with the animal advocacy group Animal Outlook. He will pay the maximum fine available for the violation.

The footage showed workers dragging from a trailer a fully-conscious cow who was too ill or injured to stand, causing her to drop over the edge of the trailer and slam onto the concrete floor, where she bellowed and writhed in blood and feces. Over the course of the [nearly 17-minute video](#), a Bravo worker botched several attempts to stun the cow, each time driving a steel bolt into her head causing apparent brain trauma but failing to render her unconscious, according to veterinary testimony. Today's guilty plea represents just some of the many legal problems Bravo has faced.

"With the increasing awareness of widespread suffering on factory farms, consumers sometimes incorrectly assume that small facilities are more humane," said Piper Hoffman, Senior Director of Legal Advocacy at Animal Outlook. "Our investigation at Bravo Packing shows nothing could be further from the truth. All production of animal-based food requires slaughtering animals and much additional cruelty. There is no right way to do the wrong thing."

The allegations leading to the recent guilty plea were only the latest in a long line of [allegations](#) against Bravo, stretching back well over a decade. For example, horses whom Bravo killed and sold as animal food have been [described as](#) "emaciated," "starving," and "too weak to stand."

The company also has a history of producing food contaminated with both bacteria and drugs often given to race horses, resulting in fines and [recalls](#). In addition to submitting the criminal complaint resulting in today's plea, Animal Outlook also submitted a complaint to the FDA and the New Jersey Department of Health in 2020 for violations of federal and state food safety laws. Samples of Bravo pet food showed *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination, and the FDA [announced a recall on the products](#).

Bravo Packing and its associated businesses slaughter cows and horses, provide dead animal removal services, and make raw frozen foods for exotic animals containing beef, horse meat, and other cow and horse body parts; given the egregious, unsanitary conditions at Bravo, an order by a federal court required that the company pause making food for pets until it has complied with food safety requirements. That order was exceptional given that the pet food industry is even [less regulated](#) than animal agriculture for human consumption; many of the animals killed are deemed unfit for human consumption and their bodies, including [“blood, hair, hoof, horn, hide trimmings, manure, and stomach and rumen contents.”](#) make their way into pet food. Bravo itself produces food for companion animals made from animals who died of causes other than slaughter, or who were dying or disabled at slaughter, according to a [2018 consumer complaint to the FDA](#).

Learn more about Animal Outlook's [undercover investigation of Bravo Packing here](#) and about Animal Outlook's [food safety complaints about Bravo here](#).

ABOUT ANIMAL OUTLOOK

[Animal Outlook](#) is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) animal advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to aid animals by strategically challenging the status quo of animal agribusiness through undercover investigations, legal advocacy, corporate and food system reform, and empowering everyone to choose vegan. <https://animaloutlook.org/>

###

[ANIMAL OUTLOOK LOGO](#)

