

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

In re: )  
) **A.Q. Docket No. 09-0131**  
)  
Nikole Catherine Terebayza a.k.a. )  
Nicole C. Burke d/b/a )  
Burke's Horses, )  
) **Decision and Order**  
) **by Reason of Default**  
Respondent. )

1. The Complaint, filed on June 4, 2009, alleges, among other things, that Nikole Catherine Terebayza, a.k.a. Nicole C. Burke d/b/a Burke's Horses, Respondent, an owner/shipper of horses (9 C.F.R. § 88.1), during 2004 failed to comply with the Commercial Transportation of Equines for Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. § 1901 note) and the regulations promulgated thereunder (9 C.F.R. § 88.1 *et seq.*). The Complainant seeks \$12,000 in civil penalties (9 C.F.R. § 88.6) for Respondent's failures to comply.

Parties and Counsel

2. The Complainant is the Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, United States Department of Agriculture (frequently herein "APHIS" or "Complainant"). APHIS is represented by Thomas N. Bolick, Esq., Office of the General Counsel (Regulatory Division), United States Department of Agriculture, South Building Room 2319, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250.

3. The Respondent, Nikole Catherine Terebayza, a.k.a. Nicole C. Burke d/b/a Burke's Horses (frequently herein "Respondent Burke" or "Respondent") has failed to appear.

### Procedural History

4. APHIS' Motion for Adoption of Proposed Default Decision and Order, filed August 31, 2009, is before me. Respondent Burke was served with a copy of that Motion and a copy of the Proposed Default Decision and Order on September 3, 2009, and failed to respond.
5. Regarding service of the Complaint, Respondent Burke was served on July 13, 2009.<sup>1</sup> What she was served with included a copy of the Complaint, a copy of the Hearing Clerk's notice letter dated June 5, 2009, and a copy of the Rules of Practice. *See* 7 C.F.R. §1.130 *et seq.*
6. Respondent Burke's answer was due to be filed within 20 days after service, that is, no later than August 3, 2009, according to section 1.136(a) of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(a). Respondent Burke never did file an answer to the Complaint, and she is in default, pursuant to section 1.136(c) of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(c).
7. Respondent Burke was informed in the Complaint and the letter accompanying the Complaint that an answer should be filed with the Hearing Clerk within 20 days after service of the complaint, and that failure to file an answer within 20 days after service of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Complaint was mailed to Respondent Burke at (b) (6), her last known address, via certified mail, return receipt requested. The Complaint was returned to the Hearing Clerk marked by the U.S. Postal Service RETURNED TO SENDER - UNCLAIMED. Section 1.147(c)(1) of the Rules of Practice (7 C.F.R. § 1.147(c)(1)) states that any document that is initially sent to a person by certified mail to make that person a party respondent in a proceeding but is returned marked by the postal service as unclaimed or refused shall be deemed to have been received by said person on the date that it is re-mailed by ordinary mail to the same address. The Hearing Clerk re-mailed the Complaint to Respondent Burke at the same address via regular mail on July 13, 2009. Therefore, Respondent Burke is deemed to have been properly served with the Complaint on July 13, 2009.

complaint constitutes an admission of the allegations in the complaint and waiver of a hearing.

8. Failure to file an answer within the time provided under 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) shall be deemed an admission of the allegations in the complaint. 7 C.F.R. § 1.136(c). Failure to file an answer constitutes a waiver of hearing. 7 C.F.R. § 1.139. Accordingly, the material facts alleged in the Complaint, which are admitted by the Respondent's default, are adopted and set forth herein as Findings of Fact. This Decision and Order, therefore, is issued pursuant to section 1.139 of the Rules of Practice. 7 C.F.R. § 1.139. [*See also* 7 C.F.R. § 380.1 *et seq.*]

#### Findings of Fact and Conclusions

9. The Secretary of Agriculture has jurisdiction over Respondent Nikole Catherine Terebayza, a.k.a. Nikole C. Burke d/b/a Burke's Horses, and the subject matter involved herein.

10. Respondent Burke has a mailing address of (b) (6)

(b) (6) Respondent Burke has been commercially transporting horses to slaughter for 25 years.

11. Respondent Burke, during 2004 as specified in paragraphs 12 and 13, commercially transported horses to slaughter and was an owner/shipper of horses within the meaning of 9 C.F.R. § 88.1.

12. On or about October 25, 2004, Respondent Burke shipped 12 horses to Cavel International in DeKalb, Illinois (hereinafter, Cavel), for slaughter. A grey mare bearing

USDA back tag # USAB 0181 and a chestnut mare bearing USDA back tag # USAB 0185 started fighting:

(a) in the middle compartment of the conveyance during the commercial transportation but Respondent Burke or her drivers failed to completely segregate the aggressive horses so that no aggressive horse could come into contact with any other horse on the conveyance, in violation of 9 C.F.R. § 88.4(a)(4)(ii), and

(b) during the commercial transportation but Respondent Burke or her drivers failed to segregate the aggressive horses. Respondent Burke thus failed to handle the horses as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that did not cause them unnecessary discomfort, stress, physical harm or trauma, in violation of 9 C.F.R. § 88.4(c).

13. On or about November 16, 2004, Respondent Burke shipped 12 horses to Cavel for slaughter. One of the horses in the shipment, a buckskin gelding with USDA back tag # USBR 2793, was blind in both eyes, yet Respondent Burke shipped it with the other horses. By transporting it in this manner, Respondent Burke failed to handle the blind horse as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that did not cause it unnecessary discomfort, stress, physical harm or trauma, in violation of 9 C.F.R. § 88.4(c).

14. During the shipments detailed in paragraphs 12 and 13, Respondent Burke failed to comply with the Commercial Transportation of Equines for Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. § 1901 note) and the regulations promulgated thereunder (9 C.F.R. § 88 *et seq.*). The maximum civil penalty per violation is \$5,000.00, and each equine transported in violation of the

regulations will be considered a separate violation. Civil penalties totaling \$12,000 are warranted and appropriate in accordance with 9 C.F.R. § 88.6 and based on APHIS's unopposed Motion filed August 31, 2009.

Order

15. The Respondent, Nikole Catherine Terebayza, a.k.a. Nicole C. Burke d/b/a Burke's Horses, is assessed civil penalties totaling **\$12,000** (twelve thousand dollars), which she shall pay by certified check(s), cashier's check(s), or money order(s), made payable to the order of "**Treasurer of the United States.**" Respondent Burke shall include with her payments any change in mailing address or other contact information.

16. Respondent Burke shall reference **AQ 09-0131** on her certified check(s), cashier's check(s), or money order(s). Payments of the civil penalties shall be sent to, and received by, APHIS, at the following address:

United States Department of Agriculture  
APHIS, Accounts Receivable  
P.O. Box 3334  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

within sixty (60) days from the effective date of this Order. The provisions of this Order shall be effective on the tenth day after this Decision and Order becomes final. *See* paragraph 17 to determine when this Decision and Order becomes final.

Finality

17. This Decision and Order shall be final without further proceedings 35 days after service unless an appeal to the Judicial Officer is filed with the Hearing Clerk within 30

days after service, pursuant to section 1.145 of the Rules of Practice (7 C.F.R. § 1.145, see attached Appendix A).

Copies of this Decision and Order shall be served by the Hearing Clerk upon each of the parties.

Done at Washington, D.C.  
this 23rd day of March 2010



Jill S. Clifton  
Administrative Law Judge

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