

# The Miami Herald

**Tempted by profits from the illegal horsemeat trade, a 20-year-old received five years behind bars.**

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Santiago Cabrera, 20, reacts to the five year prison sentence he got from Judge Sarah Zabel for the slaughter of a live horse for meat to sell. Richard Gerstein Justice Building, Miami,

Confessed horse killer Santiago Cabrera was given five years in prison on Friday for butchering two pet horses for meat. Circuit Court Judge Sarah Zabel handed down the sentence despite pleas from Cabrera's parents, who cited their son's developmental difficulties in a bid for leniency during an emotional sentencing hearing. Cabrera, 20, pleaded guilty in November to several felonies, including armed burglary and cruelty to animals in two separate 2009 incidents. He barely looked up from his lap as an interpreter explained the proceedings in Spanish — and Assistant State Attorney Michael Von Zamft displayed a gruesome photo of a bloody horse. An accused accomplice, Luis Cordero, 19, is scheduled for trial in January. "There are no winners here," said Jeanette Jordan, president of the Florida Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a rescue group that has been pushing for tough penalties in horse-

slaughter cases. “Cabrera is going to jail, but nothing can alter the fact that two beautiful, innocent creatures suffered brutal deaths. He has ruined his own life and broken his parents’ hearts, all for what? So a small number of people can eat horsemeat?” Cabrera and Cordero, with two other men, were accused of breaking into farms in Northwest Miami-Dade last year, taking horses from their stalls, slitting their throats, and carving them up for meat to sell on the black market. Police made arrests after Cabrera tried to turn in Cordero for reward money. “The judge needed to make a strong ruling because of the amount of people butchering animals illegally in Dade County,” said Richard Couto, of the Miami-based Animal Recovery Mission. He credited the animal activists who attended every court proceeding in the case with sending a clear message to the judge. The SPCA estimates that 55 horses have been killed for black-market meat in the past two years, including an animal that the group rescued.