

HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGES: FACT SHEET

THE ISSUE: IN 30 SECONDS

Animal rights activists in New York City have developed a long history of working to ban the practice of using horse-drawn carriages as a tourist attraction. These activists claim that working long hours every day pulling carriages through crowded city streets is unnatural and abusive to the horses, while carriage organizations argue that the horses are treated well and that the claims of abuse by activists are unfounded.

THE ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

"The harsh reality of the life of a carriage horse working in New York City is that horses simply are not meant to work in dangerous midtown traffic.

The 220 horses (68 medallions) routinely work at least 9 hours a day, pulling a vehicle that weighs hundreds of pounds, on hard pavement, while breathing exhaust from cars, buses and taxis. Unaccustomed to the urban environment, horses can be "spooked" easily and cause accidents that inflict great damage on vehicles, drivers and most often, the horses themselves. There have been more than 18 accidents in the past two years alone.

At the end of the day the horses return to their tiny stalls in stables on the far West side of the city, or as Jon Stewart once called it, "The sad-eyed horse carriage district." The cramped space doesn't allow these enormous animals to lie down or to move about freely. Nor are they afforded any turn-out or pasture time that equine veterinarians agree is needed for horses to live healthy lives.

After they work the busy and unsafe streets of NYC, the carriage horses are sent to auctions in Pennsylvania where they can be - and are - sold to kill-buyers who transport the animals to Mexico or Canada to be inhumanely slaughtered for exported meat.

The horse carriage industry is a cash only business which does not use meters. Carriage drivers routinely charge residents and tourists rates above what they are legally entitled to charge. The lack of any financial accountability controls creates a vacuum of potential revenue for the City. At the same time, the City annually spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to monitor the horses, and repair roadways damaged by the carriages. The status quo presents a losing situation for New York City."¹

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What will happen to the NYC carriage horses if they are phased out and replaced with electric cars?

The bills would require that the NYC carriage horse owners turn over their horses to an approved rescue, sanctuary or private farm. NYCLASS, in coordination with the ASPCA, is working to ensure that every single NYC carriage horse is matched with a loving forever home. Right now, carriage horses have no legal protections once their careers are over -- and many have been found on the auction block. In fact, 60-70 carriage horses disappear off of city rolls every year -- with no record of where they ended up.¹

What are the arguments against banning horse-drawn carriages in NYC?

From *Blue Star Equiculture's Open Letter on NYC Carriage Horses*:²

- Currently, 100,000 horses from the United States every year meet their end horribly in slaughterhouses in Canada and Mexico, and the vastly overwhelming majority of those horses are not, have never been, nor will ever be commercial carriage horses.
- The efforts to end horse slaughter and address the "unwanted horse" problem by finding

¹ NYCLASS, <http://www.nyclass.org/about/problem>

² Blue Star Equiculture, <http://www.equiculture.org/nyc-position-statement.aspx>

homes for homeless horses are in no way incompatible with the effort to preserve and support working horses in urban environments.

- Efforts to ban the carriage horses in New York and elsewhere are not only unfounded on the surface with their allegations of "institutionalized abuse," but also are counterproductive to REAL progress in improving the welfare of America's horses in meaningful ways. Countless resources, energy and money has been spent by anti-carriage-horse organizations without doing good for any horses.
- Carriage horses in NYC have all of their basic needs met or exceeded, including clean water, adequate food, routine dental and veterinary care, exercise, and breaks.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Coalition for New York City Animals

<http://banhdc.org>

Blue Star Equiculture

<http://www.equiculture.org>

NYCLASS

<http://www.nyclass.org>

CONNECTIONS TO JUSTICE

Animal Rights: "The other animals humans eat, use in science, hunt, trap, and exploit in a variety of ways, have a life of their own that is of importance to them apart from their utility to us. They are not only in the world, they are aware of it. What happens to them matters to them. Each has a life that fares better or worse for the one whose life it is.

That life includes a variety of biological, individual, and social needs. The satisfaction of these needs is a source of pleasure, their frustration or abuse, a source of pain. In these fundamental ways, the nonhuman animals in labs and on farms, for example, are the same as human beings. And so it is that the ethics of our dealings with them, and with one another, must acknowledge the same fundamental moral principles.

At its deepest level, human ethics is based on the independent value of the individual: The moral worth of any one human being is not to be measured by how useful that person is in advancing the interest of other human beings. To treat human beings in ways that do not honor their independent value is to violate that most basic of human rights: the right of each person to be treated with respect.

The philosophy of animal rights demands only that logic be respected. For any argument that plausibly explains the independent value of human beings implies that other animals have this same value, and have it equally. And any argument that plausibly explains the right of humans to be treated with respect, also implies that these other animals have this same right, and have it equally, too."³

Do animals have inherent rights, and how do those rights relate to those of humans? How far does the concept of "animal rights," as described by Dr. Tom Regan above, go?

³ Culture and Animals, <http://www.cultureandanimals.org/pop1.html>