

The New York City “Carriage-Horse Industry” An Animals’ Angels Investigation

1. Introduction

New York City currently has an estimated total of 220 carriage horses, 293 drivers and 68 licensed carriages. The horses are housed in five stables, all on the far west side of Manhattan from 37th St. to 52nd St. between 11th and 12th Avenue. From there, the horses have to travel to Central Park, where they stand in line to wait for customers between 10am and 9pm.

The aim of the investigation was to document the working and housing conditions for these horses and to find possible answers to the questions where the carriage horses end up when their working life is over. Some of the pictures shown in this report were provided to Animals’ Angels by an anonymous source.

2. Observations

a) Clinton Park Stables

Location: 618 West 52 Street



Upper two floors of Clinton Park Stables



Carriage horse sharing feed with pigeons

This appeared to be the largest of the five stables. The three story building houses the horses on the upper two floors. The horses have to enter and leave the building via steep, narrow ramps, which is hard on the horses and makes evacuation in case of a fire difficult.



Ramp for horses



Horses being brought down ramp

b) Shamrock Stables

Location: 522 West 45 Street

Owner: Ian Mc Keevor

The yellow fronted building with three doors is quite large. The horses are kept in pens on the ground floor. The following information was received from the Irish owner, Ian McKeevor:

- Shamrock Stables is the second largest of the five stables. They have between 50 and 55 horses, but only 31 are out at the same time.
- His horses usually work nine hours per day. The horses work either day or night shift.
- The horses are bought from the Amish Community in Pennsylvania. **They are purchased directly from the farm, not from an auction.**

c) Westside Livery Stables

Location: 538 West 38 Street

Owner: Tony Salerno

Westside Livery is an old, very narrow, red-colored building. The horses are kept on the upper levels. The building has no air conditioning and small holes have been knocked through the side walls, likely to improve air circulation. Only a few small fans are installed on each floor and one can only imagine the temperatures there during the hot summer months.

Steep ramps connect the upper floors to the ground floor and the horses have to walk up and down these ramps every day. The horses are confined in tie stalls and are tethered to their feed trough, which makes it impossible for them to turn around in the pens. Many of the pens have no windows and are extremely dark. Each pen has a small, plastic water bucket. However, during the investigation, several of these buckets were found empty. Several horses had marks on their bodies and were quite thin.



Steep ramp to upper levels



Thin



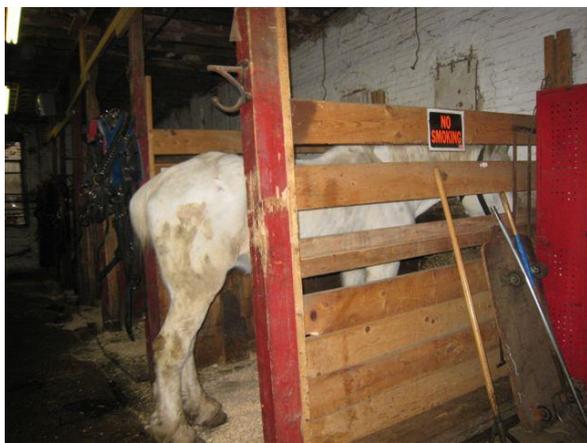
Bay horse thin



Some urine and feces stains were visible. The stalls had very poor bedding, a thin layer of sawdust only covering parts of the stall so that the horses were forced to stand on the bare floor.



Poor bedding



Horse in small tie stall



Horse tethered to feed trough

Fire Safety is another concern with this stable: The horses have to be untied from the feed troughs and evacuated from the upper floors, which would be extremely difficult. In addition, no sprinkler system and no other fire protection devices were observed except some “fire buckets” filled with sand.



Fire buckets filled with sand



Dark and narrow upper floor of stable

d) **Byrne Stables**

Location: 547 West 37 Street

Owner: Neil Byrne

Byrne Stable is a narrow, grey colored building with two floors. The horses leave the stable through a large, metal shutter door.

The investigators spoke with one of the Mexican carriage horse drivers working for Byrne. When asked about his horse carriage he stated that his horse would be nearly 20 years old. He said that the horses sometimes become very frightened in traffic and that he had an accident when one of the horses bolted. He fell off, got caught up in the tack and was dragged along by the wheel. He had to be hospitalized. He explained that the horses do not like trucks and crowds of people gathering around them taking pictures with a flash.

The investigators observed an unusual looking horse truck parked next to the stable. Animals' Angels documented the exact same truck one week later parked in front of **New Holland Sales Stables, a weekly horse auction in Lancaster County, PA.**



March 16, 2009; Byrnes truck parked in front of New Holland auction



Byrne truck at the New York stable

Byrne was not the only New York carriage horse operation observed at the New Holland auction. The Chateau Farms (Stable located at 608 West 48 Street) truck and horse trailer loaded with horses was also documented there numerous times.

- According to a Maryland horse rescue, a New Yorker carriage horse named “Manhattan” was rescued from the kill pen at New Holland on January 19, 2009. The group identified the horse as a carriage horse because of the number engraved on his left front hoof.
- Former Clinton Stable horse “DADA” with hoof number 2711 was also found at an auction and rescued. (Source: The Coalition for NYC Animals, Inc.)

- Linda Marcus, a long time horse owner, testified at the January 30th hearing of the Consumer Affairs Committee that she had rescued a seven year old former NYC carriage horse who was one day away from being sent to slaughter.



Chateau Farms truck at New Holland Auction



Horses inside Chateau Farms trailer

The New York Horse and Carriage Association claims that 90% of their horses are purchased in the Amish Country of Pennsylvania directly from the farm. The association also states that all of their horses are retired to private farms or sanctuaries.

The question remains: What are these New York City carriage horse companies doing at the New Holland Auction if not buying or selling? If the horses are really retired to private farms and sanctuaries, why does the Carriage Horse Industry not provide the public with names and addresses of these farms? Why wouldn't they end the rumors that carriage horses are being sold at auctions, bought by kill buyers and shipped to slaughter? Our guess is because they can't.

The NYC Administrative Code requires that the Department of Health is notified of any transfer of ownership of a licensed horse including name and address of the buyer. However, § 17-329 offers no real protection for the horses because this requirement only applies if the horse is sold in **New York City**.

§ 17-329 Disposition of licensed horse. *The department shall be notified of the transfer of ownership or other disposition of a licensed horse within ten days thereafter. Such notice shall include the date of disposition and if sold in New York City, the name and address of the buyer or other transferee and such other information as the commissioner may prescribe. A horse shall not be sold or disposed of except in a humane manner.*

e) Observations outside the stables

When the carriage horses leave the stables and start heading to Central Park, they have to find their way through streets with overwhelming traffic – a dangerous endeavour. The observations made it very clear that there is no room for horse drawn carriages in the 21st century traffic of Manhattan.

Not only are the horses forced to inhale the exhaust fumes, which is likely to cause respiratory problems, they are also exposed to risky overtakes of impatient cab drivers, rushing emergency vehicles and honking horns.



Cab driver overtaking carriage, honking horn



Carriage horse waiting for customers along busy road



Horse Carriage blocking traffic lane



Horse Carriage in heavy traffic

Once the carriages arrive at Central Park South, the horses have to wait long hours in line for customers along a busy street. This is especially concerning during the hot summer months, since there is no shade at the “hack line” and the horses have to stand on the hot asphalt. (According to the New York Times the asphalt surfaces in the city can reach temperatures of 200 degrees Fahrenheit)

Heat prostration has been among **the leading causes of death** in the carriage horse populations of New York, Atlanta and Boston. (NYC Bar Association’s Committee on legal issues pertaining to animals/Presentation H. Cheever, DVM)



Carriage horse tied to water hydrant



Thin carriage horse waiting for customers

One can only imagine what standing or running on hard paved streets all day does to the horses. It is questionable that the horses receive adequate farrier care. Several of the observed horses had extremely poor hooves.

Holly Cheever, DVM, testified at the January 30th hearing of the Consumer Affairs Committee that “constant pounding on hard paved streets **exacerbates lameness**, especially since many horses come into this industry with pre-existing injuries or arthritis incurred in their previous uses on race tracks and Amish farms.”



Poor hooves



Horse with scar on leg



Observations /Areas of Concern:

At the stables:

- The tie stalls found at Westside Livery were small, dark and provided very little bedding
- The horses at Westside Livery were tethered to their feed trough, making it impossible for them to turn around.
- Several of the horses had marks on their body and were noticeably thin.
- Insufficient access to water at Westside Livery.
- The horses have to walk up and down steep ramps.
- Stables that house horses on upper levels appeared to be fire traps, with no sprinkler system installed and poor evacuation possibilities for the horses.

Outside the stables:

- Heavy traffic and high population density create a dangerous environment.
- Horses spend their days “nose to tailpipe”, which causes respiratory problems
- Horses work nine hour shifts and are forced to spend a lot of it “parked” along a busy street, standing on asphalt without shade. Lameness and Heat Prostration are major problems.