

What's Wrong With Horse-Drawn Carriages?



Our goal is simple: we need to get horses off the streets of Victoria. Through education and legislation, with the help of the community, we aim to have a bylaw passed that will ban horse-drawn vehicles from Victoria.

Horses and Traffic Do Not Mix

Busy city streets are certainly no place for horses, as they are easily spooked and have a strong 'flight' response. The blinders that are used on all the horses is to help 'blind' them, shielding them from seeing what might panic them. This does not change the simple fact that the horses find a city environment very stressful, and it's hard on their bodies, and so should not be trotting amongst busy traffic.

Accident Prone

While there are very few recorded collisions or mishaps in Victoria (*no reports through ICBC, and two reports to the Victoria Police since 2000*), a Freedom of Information request from the City of Victoria, as well as private polling of James Bay residents, demonstrates incidents occur with frequency: horses appearing tired or unhealthy, collisions with vehicles and roadside objects, as well as horses breaking free and running down streets and in parks -- even across the lawn of the Legislature and Empress Hotel. While a free-running horse is what we might consider an ideal for a horse, it's a nightmare and a danger in a city.



The Facts

- Victoria horses work upwards of eight hours a day, and up to five days a week. This does not include the daily transport to or from Saanich into Victoria twice a day, or the time spent at a transition zone near Ogden Point in James Bay. While we humans may not have a problem with working these hours or enduring this commute (*and we might, were we forced to cart people about for years*), it's not fair to impose our expectations on other animals.
- Day after day of uncomfortable standing and walking on paved streets and inhaling fumes from traffic take their toll on horses, and the noise and traffic are stressful for them. It is also suspected that the foul odor coming from the Inner Harbour and Ogden Point is due in part to the waste of horses moving through the sewers into the water. A city horse can leave 15-30lbs of manure on the streets daily.
- Loose and outdated laws leave the SPCA and police virtually powerless to protect horses. Except for the requirements of municipal business licensing, carriage companies are self-regulated and act in their own interests. This means that there are virtually no recorded statistics on a wide range of issues, from collisions, injuries and mishaps to horse fatalities.

The Facts (continued)

- Besides the harm that can come from a rampaging horse (*triggered by something as simple as a wasp sting*), there are other potential threats. Drivers are distracted by questioning or rowdy passengers; lights may be left off at dusk. Inexperienced drivers may be unable to control an upset horse.
- Both tourists and residents, increasing in numbers every year, are unhappy with the delays caused by the slow-moving carriages. The James Bay Neighbourhood Environmental Association wishes to see smaller, more mobile vehicles used in the narrow streets, yet the carriage companies introduced even larger and slower wagons in 2000.
- The carriages are not a specific tourist draw, and visitors are shocked to discover that Victoria still uses horses in this way and would prefer that we join the ranks of progressive cities like London, Paris, Beijing, Las Vegas and Toronto, which have all banned horse-drawn carriages.
- According to City of Victoria records, disputes amongst the horse-carriage companies and bylaw enforcement requires significant time; no other businesses have required as much attention and dispute resolution. Hundreds of documents, response to letters and complaints, and further paperwork are required each year by City Hall, per a Freedom of Information investigation carried out this past year.



How To Help

We are working to ensure that all of the horses will be cared for at sanctuaries. You can help us in several ways:

Education. People see the horses on the streets regularly, but almost never consider what is going on. You can help by discussing the issue with friends, co-workers and relatives, and of course, by never taking a carriage ride.



Write Letters. Contact Victoria City Hall (www.victoria.ca) and the James Bay Neighborhood Environment Association (www.jbnea.org) and let them know that you care about these horses and want them off the streets!

Victoria City Hall
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6
(250) 385-5711
councillors@victoria.ca


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234 Menzies St.
Victoria BC V8V 2G7
(250) 384-5334
info@jbnea.org

Join Our Effort. Help us to educate and pass a bylaw to ban horse-drawn vehicles in Victoria, and find an appropriate refuge for the horses.

Dave Shishkoff, Canadian Correspondent, Friends of Animals
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Become a Member of Friends of Animals. Your membership helps to fund this and other interventions for animals. Visit our website or call for details.

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www.FriendsofAnimals.org