

VHS position statement on carriage horses (horses used to pull carriages in urban settings)

VHS is opposed to the use of horses to pull carriages as tourist attractions in urban settings. The constant exposure to traffic, noise, and pollution; the long hours of standing and walking on hard surfaces; the hard labour under sometimes extreme weather conditions; and lack of pasture access are not consistent with a horse guardian's responsibility to provide high-quality, long-term care for horses.

As urban carriage horses are active in the summer tourism months, they risk exposure to heat-stress. This risk is increased by pulling heavy loads on hot pavements, high humidity, infrequent watering, poor conditioning and obesity.

Horse-drawn carriages share the roadway with motor vehicles, putting both the animals and public at risk. As prey animals, horses have a highly developed flight drive that is easily triggered when they are startled by an unexpected or threatening stimulus. This reaction can happen to even the best-trained and well-mannered horses, and is often the cause of accidents for horse-drawn carriages.

Carriage horses used in urban settings can spend considerable amounts of time close to automotive exhaust pollution, exposing them to respiratory health risks.

Carriage horses spend a great deal of time on paved streets, making hoof care challenging.

For these reasons, VHS believes that urban areas are not suitable for carriage horses and favours a ban on the use of horses for such purposes.