

**MYTH:** *Horses are unpredictable “fright and flight” prey animals, and so carriage horses are “ticking time-bombs” – it is “inevitable” that a carriage horse will spook in the scary city and have an accident.*

**FACT:** While it is true that any horse can spook unpredictably, individual horses are predictable in their unpredictability. **Carriage horses are extremely well-trained horses who are well-adjusted to their urban environment.** The noise and bustle of traffic, emergency vehicles, construction work, and other strange sights and sounds are not at all strange to the urban carriage horse. As a part of his usual environment, things that might cause an ordinary, untrained horse to bolt elicit only passing notice from the seasoned carriage horse.

**MYTH:** *Blinders are worn by carriage horses to “blind” them or to keep them from panicking due to the sights all around them in a busy city.*

**FACT:** Blinders make a horse see more like we do, which is out of both eyes directly ahead of us. Horses’ eyes are on the sides of their heads, which gives them a 340-degree field of vision, including an area in front of them where they see binocularly, aiding in depth perception. With all the visual distractions of the city, **reducing vision to just that which the horse can see out of both eyes helps the carriage horse remain focused.** The horse sees quite well, while wearing blinders, and his hearing is not limited at all. If he wants to see something, he merely has to turn his head to look.

**MYTH:** *“Progressive” cities like London, Paris, Beijing and Toronto have banned carriages, so we should, too.*

**FACT:** NONE of these cities have banned horses or carriages. Paris, for instance, has several carriage companies that give rides from a hackline underneath the Eiffel Tower. In fact, the latest advances in Europe, notably France, in “green” urban living incorporate horses into municipal services such as collecting recycling and watering civic plantings. **The urban horse is making a comeback in societies that are making efforts to reconnect with the earth and live environmentally consciously.**

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# THE TRUTH ABOUT CARRIAGE HORSES

## THE 12 MOST COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CARRIAGE HORSES, DEBUNKED.

Radical anti-carriage-horse activists are agitating against urban working horses, seeking to deprive them of their homes and jobs through calls for total bans on horse-drawn carriages.

In their attempts to win public sympathy for their extreme position, they have perpetuated a host of myths, misconceptions, and outright lies about carriage horses.

For many people, the closest they’ll ever experience a living, breathing horse is seeing a carriage horse in a city. We owe it to the horses to honor their partnership with us in building our civilization--not by banishing horses to some unknown fate “out there”--but by celebrating the honest labor of mankind’s most important animal companion. For 6000 years, horse and human have enjoyed each other’s company and worked together as partners.

- Working in harness is not cruel or abusive. The harness is a tool that helps the horse do his job, easily and comfortably.
- Horses belong with people, not out ‘running wild and free’ someplace. ‘Wild and free’ is a euphemism for neglected and unloved.
- Carriage drivers and owners love and care for their horses.
- A happy, well-cared-for carriage horse is a BEAUTIFUL HORSE.

**If you want to help horses, take a carriage ride! Your fare supports the care and well-being of the carriage horses. Please also support your local horse rescue that cares for the homeless horses in your area who are not as fortunate as the carriage horses are.**

**MYTH:** *The average working life of a carriage horse is four years, after which time they are all sent to slaughterhouses.*

**FACT:** There is no evidence to support these assertions. **The overwhelming majority of carriage horses work long, happy, healthy careers spanning 10 to 15 years or even more, whereupon they are not sent to auction, but rather are retired,** either to the carriage owner's personal property, to private homes found through networking, or to retirement facilities such as Blue Star Equiculture ([www.equiculture.org](http://www.equiculture.org)).

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses are forced to endure harmful extremes of weather.*

**FACT:** Horses are **outdoor animals that Mother Nature has equipped with an incredible ability to adapt to all manner of weather conditions, growing thick winter coats in the winter and sweating to cool themselves in the summer.** Cities where carriage horses work have regulations about under what weather conditions carriages may operate.

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses don't get adequate food or water.*

**FACT:** Carriage horses have special diets that include both hay and grain or senior feed. **Most carriage barns feed "free-choice" hay and horses are given free access to water.** Water is provided at work by refillable buckets carried under the carriage or by watering troughs.

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses are forced to carry heavy loads for long hours, overworked to the point of exhaustion.*

**FACT:** As a general rule, horses are capable of pulling 2-3 times their own body weight on wheels over paved ground pretty much all day long. The average carriage horse today weighs 1200 – 1800 lbs. The typical commercial vis-à-vis used in cities around the world weighs 900 – 1000 lbs. **Even fully loaded, a carriage is quite easy for a large horse to pull. It is the equivalent of an average person pushing a shopping cart with a few gallons of milk in it.** The typical shift for a carriage horse is generally no more than 9 hours (usually much less) and is often regulated by the city in which the horses work. While carriage horses are more than capable of doing the easy work of pulling a carriage every single day, most carriage horses get at least two days off per week.

**MYTH:** *Working on pavement is damaging to carriage horses' hooves and legs, causing lameness and joint damage.*

**FACT:** Horses may not have been made to walk on asphalt... but asphalt was made for horses to walk on! Carriage horses wear special horseshoes or boots to protect their feet from wear and tear. They work at a walk, which is low-impact. Hard even surfaces are easier for the horses to walk on than soft, uneven ground. **Carriage horses generally have fewer leg and joint problems than riding horses.**

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses are kept in cramped, unsanitary conditions when not at work.*

**FACT:** Although horses can and do sleep standing up, they need to lay down for a couple of hours a day for restorative REM sleep. **To keep their horses in top fitness for work, carriage owners provide stalls plenty roomy enough for horses to lie down and stretch out.** These stalls offer a horse security and privacy as well as a place to eat and drink in peace, and are mucked at least daily, oftentimes several times a day. Manure is never left to accumulate, as there simply isn't room for it in an urban setting.

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses lead a "nose-to-tailpipe" existence, breathing in noxious fumes from traffic.*

**FACT:** **The air that carriage horses breathe is no better or worse than the air the average pedestrian on the sidewalk breathes,** due to the effect of what are known as "street canyons." If air pollution is a problem in a particular city, then it is a problem for all living beings that inhabit it – horses, humans, pets and wildlife. The solution to air quality issues is not to ban horses, but to reduce the use of fossil fuels in the urban environment (perhaps through the use of more horses!).

**MYTH:** *Carriage horses are never allowed to live a normal life with interactions with other horses and access to turnout.*

**FACT:** **Carriage horses have highly complex relationships with both their drivers and their fellow carriage horses.** They socialize with their friends while at work through body posturing and vocalizing. At home, in the barn, carriage horses generally live in stalls with barred half-walls that allow the horses to communicate and socialize without risk of being bitten or kicked in a fight. **Many carriage horses receive daily turnout and those that do not, spend a portion of the year at pasture, usually during the off-season.**

**MYTH:** *The lowered head position and body language of a carriage horse indicates that they are tired, sad, and depressed.*

**FACT:** **The carriage horse, standing in a carriage stand with head at withers level, and one hind leg cocked is a relaxed, well-adjusted horse.** Horses who are frightened, stressed out or excited hold their heads up high with their ears pricked and eyes bulging, in order to take in as much information as possible. In contrast, a horse who is relaxed and comfortable with his surroundings will "tune out" and take a nap or assume the posture commonly seen in carriage stands

Note: a carriage horse who is cocking his hind leg is not injured or lame. Horses, when relaxed, will shift their weight from one hind foot to the other as they nap standing up.