

Morgan Spillman
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Professor Hepp-Galvan
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Horse-Drawn Carriages in New York City

Let's address the elephant in the room, or the horse in the big scary city of New York perhaps. It isn't the 1800s anymore, and we can't use the excuse of limited transportation in a city with a million ways to get around. Horse-drawn carriages are outdated, cruel, inhumane, and should be outlawed immediately.

On August 10th, a bystander video of a collapsed horse in Midtown Manhattan surged on the internet. In the video, the horse is unable to get up and is being flogged by the driver. Responses on [Twitter](#) said that the horse is to have suffered "dehydration, malnutrition, heatstroke, and muscular atrophy".

Animal Rights activists have been fighting the horse-drawn carriage industry in New York for years. These "Horse-drawn carriages operate in Central Park above 34th Street, generally catering to tourists...for roughly \$165..." and they've been popular "since the 1880s"([NY Post](#)). The death of Ryder, the horse that collapsed, was a catalyst for conversations about legislation to ban carriages for good.

Former Mayor De Blasio tried to get the ban passed during his term in 2013 but was unable and other plans to phase out the use of carriages repeatedly failed. However, legislation passed in 2019 made "it illegal for horse-drawn carriages to sell rides when temperatures hit 90 degrees or more. The animals are not allowed to work more than nine hours a day"([NY Post](#)). Despite this rule, Ryder's death reflected "months of systematic neglect, abuse, greed and lies"([NYT](#)), according to advocate Edita Birnkant.

Spokespeople from the Transport Workers Union Local 100, which represent the

carriage industry workers, claimed that “the blame was unfairly placed”(NYT) and “was not representative of the entire industry”(CBS). Ryder supposedly passed from lymphoma but the Manhattan District Attorney’s office is conducting an animal abuse investigation to determine what sickened the horse. Regardless, operators and industry workers say the horses are treated well and housed in box stalls with space to move around.

Even if the horses are well-housed, forcing them to work hours in difficult conditions is cruel and unnecessary. Several factors define horse-drawn carriages as abuse, such as: their sensitivity to loud noise, breathing problems from pollution, working in harsh weather, dodging traffic, and injuries from obstacles on the streets. Ultimately, there are other cheaper transportation alternatives that don’t risk the lives of animals, like show-carts, walking, or taking the subway.