



Peta Prompts Debate on Carriage Horses

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Try this, Brian - Here's a semi-serious challenge to columnist Brian Hicks' April 10 column: Let's see how you feel after pulling a cart filled with about 600 pounds (three times your weight, give or take a few pounds) around downtown for an hour. Carriages in Charleston often are jammed with up to 17 people, which means horses and mules are pulling three times their weight - more than the load in any other city in the country that has tourist carriages. After you're done lugging the wagon, let's then see how cavalier you are about belittling the crux of PETA's message - that carriage animals here need better treatment and that City Council ought to get off its "high horse" to revisit the issue. I'm not the biggest fan of PETA - and I'm still irked at how the group treated Mepkin Abbey's monks on their chickens. But don't ignore the broad message just because you don't like the messenger. ANDY BRACK McClain Street Charleston

Day of protest -- It seems like every time I turn around I read about another carriage accident in Charleston caused by a horse spooking. So it is puzzling why Mayor Joe Riley would say the carriages are "very safe." Horses are fearful, prey animals, and uncontrollable when spooked, which they can be at the slightest provocation. It is irresponsible to say that this industry is safe when this is a possibility. Charleston is the only city that packs 16 passengers plus a driver into a carriage pulled by one horse driving through the sweltering heat and humidity on blazing hot asphalt. That is clearly inhumane. These beleaguered and exploited horses are no better than horse slaves, and it is time Charleston closed down this exploitative trade. The best thing to do for tourists who want a taste of the South is to boycott Charleston and visit other Southern cities that do not cater to this industry. Cities all over the world are coming together on June 6 for a day of protest and recognition of these suffering beasts of burden under the banner of Horses Without Carriages International. More and more people are becoming educated to the plight of the carriage horse and want to see the industry go the way of gas lamps. ELIZABETH FOREL Coalition to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages New York, N.Y.