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## City investigating carriage company case

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By Allyson Bird

Charleston tourism management officials have launched an investigation into Carolina Polo and Carriage Co. after a woman who boards horses accused the company of neglecting its animals.

Nancy Lane, who first contacted People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, said five of the company's horses have died over the past two years. In a letter to the city, she accuses the company of hiding sick horses from the public view, delaying medical care and trimming costs by feeding the horses low-quality hay.

Lane said she began caring for horses four years ago but never saw one of the animals die until working with Carolina Polo. She documented pages of heated interactions with the company's employees in which she says she requested additional medical treatment and in which she accuses Carolina Polo manager Robert Knoth of using political influence to shield the company from scrutiny.

"It is my opinion that Robert Knoth willfully neglects and abuses his horses," she wrote to city officials.

Lane lists various reasons for the horses' deaths, ranging from abdominal pain to lack of sweating.

City public information director Barbara Vaughn confirmed an open investigation of the Hayne Street business but provided no additional information Monday afternoon.

Asked about his company's relationship with Lane, Knoth said he has "heard her name." He declined to comment on Lane's specific allegations.

"I don't think there's any truth to that," Knoth said. "I think that's a complete fabrication on somebody's part."

PETA's animals in entertainment specialist Desiree Acholla said the group received a photo of a dead horse and "would push for vigorous prosecution" if officials determine that Carolina Polo provided inadequate care.

"This is pretty much stereotypical of cities in which these industries are allowed to operate," Acholla said. PETA in March sent a letter to Mayor Joe Riley and the Charleston City Council asking for a horse-drawn carriage ban.

Riley issued a public response in support of the businesses. Acholla said Monday that Lane's letter could reignite PETA's call for action.

"It's unfortunate something so tragic would cause us to make a renewal like this, but it just goes to show that this industry can be deadly," she said.