



City Carriage Review Cites Violations

First look under new animal care ordinance

CHARLESTON CITY PAPER - July 8, 2009

by Greg Ha **City Carriage Review Cites Violations**

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by Greg Hambrick

Horse carriage companies have been cited for a host of infractions as the City of Charleston does its first veterinary review under new animal welfare guidelines.

The inspection of each of the five downtown horse carriage operators was performed in late May and early June by Dr. Amy Hayek and city staff, prior to an unrelated review of the Polo Carriage Co. over concerns about horses that have died over the past few years.

There were a myriad of infractions, says Tourism Director Vanessa Turner-Maybank. Each carriage company has been given a timeline in which to address concerns.

"Inspections and guidance ensure that we stay on top of the overall care of the animals," she says.

The input from an independent vet is a good thing, says Tommy Doyle, operator of Palmetto Carriage Co.

"We are very open to a different way to do things that's better for our animals," he says.

And the accountability will help ensure all operators are conforming to the city's stringent standards.

"To follow the rules is very expensive," Doyle says. "The system the city has in place is fantastic, but the rules need to be followed."

Among the city's findings:

- Chlorine bleach was a common disinfectant used in stalls. It can produce a life-threatening gas when mixed with horse urine. Poor ventilation and low ceilings contribute to this problem.
- While all horse stalls met city standards, the report states they need to be uniformly larger to improve animal digestive health and muscle function.

- The main concern was poor hoof quality. Increased monitoring and alternatives to shoes, including boots, were suggested.
- Only Palmetto Carriage Co. seemed to be feeding animals enough hay. Others were relying too heavily on substitutes.
- Horses would benefit from more consistent cleaning of their genitals to reduce hygiene problems.
- Some health records were not consistent or easily accessible.
- None of the carriage company owners knew established weight limits or the weight of their own carriages. Many carriages had improper attachments, putting unnecessary stress on the animals.
- The city should have training requirements for carriage drivers that conforms to national standards, including harness cleaning and repair and emergency instruction.

In April, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals called on Charleston to end horse-drawn carriage operations due to a string of horse accidents over the past few years that have caused several injuries and damage to passengers, vehicles, buildings, and public property.

Mayor Joe Riley refused, saying the industry had been "vigilantly" managed over the past 25 years and that the industry is "highly motivated to ensure safety for their riders and for their horses."

Here are city documents from the inspections:

Overview

[Carolina Polo & Carriage Co.](#)

[Classic Carriage Co.](#)

[Olde South Carriage Co.](#)

[Olde Towne Carriage](#)

[Palmetto Carriage Co.](#)

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