Humane World for Animals

Equine Protection Special Report

Who is responsible for protecting New York City's carriage horses?

Humane World for Animals' equine protection team finds that New York City's carriage-horse oversight system has been fragmented for decades, leaving critical questions about horse health, identity, work hours and accountability unanswered even as industry representatives insist the system protects the horses.

October 2026

Horse pulling a carriage through heavy traffic in New York City, October 2026. Humane World for Animals staff photo.

WHAT WE FOUND

Rules exist. Oversight is unclear when you follow the horse.

This research looks beyond whether New York had rules on paper. It asks whether the industry and the City could make those protections work horse by horse, day after day.

New York's carriage-horse industry has operated for generations under extensive health, licensing, work-hour, identification and safety requirements. It also operates collectively through shared stables, veterinarians, trade organizations, union representation and coordinated policy positions.

The research found a double weakness: City oversight was fragmented across agencies, and the records do not show a reliable horse-by-horse system that closed those gaps.

Key findings

- No one agency was responsible for comprehensive oversight of each horse.
- Industry leaders had long identified many of the same welfare, safety and oversight needs now cited in reform proposals.
- Horse identity, ownership and operating records could not be readily reconciled.
- Serious incidents exposed gaps in work-hour verification, incident review and rule compliance.
- No comprehensive horse-by-horse tracing or retirement system was found.

Regulation can establish minimum protections but relies on an industry taking responsibility for complying with them.

> **"Compliance should not depend on regulators standing beside carriages with tickets in hand."**
>
> *— Brian Shapiro, New York State Director, Humane World for Animals — NYC Council testimony, July 2026*

For decades, New York City has tried to regulate the risks associated with commercial horse-drawn carriages through licensing requirements, veterinary certifications, inspections, work limits, weather restrictions, mandatory furloughs and driver training.

Yet records reviewed by Humane World for Animals (formerly called the Humane Society of the United States) reveal a persistent accountability problem: responsibility is divided across agencies, routine fitness certification begins with owner-selected veterinarians, and the City still struggles to answer basic questions about individual horses.

The gaps become clearest when the records are examined horse by horse.

Destiny, a 23-year-old bay mare, ran into Manhattan traffic one month after an independent veterinarian was unable to complete the testing he considered necessary to determine whether she was sound. Sophia was found sore in both hind legs and formally marked unfit to work. Sally was photographed working in 2026 even though the City registry listed her status as expired, while her permanent identification appears to place her age about a decade higher than the City record.

These stark examples illustrate a regulatory structure that relies on divided responsibility, incomplete information and, at important points, cooperation from the people being regulated.

Even one of the carriage industry's own veterinarians acknowledged the central problem at a July 2026 City Council hearing. Dr. Gabriel Cook told Council members that almost all of his frustrations with the industry

concerned failures of regulation and enforcement and said it was “extremely disappointing” that no City agency or the City government had been willing to “take control and responsibility.”

His testimony underscores the central problem identified in these records: responsibility is divided, while independent oversight remains limited.

PART I — A SYSTEM WITH RULES, BUT DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITY

No one agency was responsible for the horse

Carriage horse in New York City, 2012. Jo-Anne McArthur / The Ghosts In Our Machine / We Animals

A system with many regulators and shared responsibility

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is responsible for carriage-horse health licensing and reviews veterinary certifications and furlough documentation. The Department of Consumer and Worker Protection licenses drivers, carriage owners and carriages. New York Police Department (NYPD) performs some enforcement. Parks personnel enforce rules in Central Park. The New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) regulates activity on streets. The Mayor’s Office of Animal Welfare participates in coordination.

DOHMH itself described carriage-horse oversight as requiring “citywide coordination.”

That description points to the problem.

One agency licenses the horse. Another licenses the driver and carriage. Another may enforce a weather suspension. Another enforces park rules. And the veterinarian ordinarily certifying that a horse is fit to work is chosen by the horse’s owner.

> **“There is no clear evidence that these agencies effectively connect this information to track which horse is working with which carriage, driver, or owner, or how long horses are working.”**
>
> *— Brian Shapiro, — NYC Council testimony, July 2026*

When Council members asked DOHMH how fitness is determined, the agency explained that horse owners must obtain veterinary examinations every four to eight months and submit certifications to DOHMH. The owners have their own veterinarians; City veterinary personnel review their certifications. When DOHMH subsequently has reason to believe a horse needs assessment—because of an observation, complaint or NYPD referral—the agency can direct the owner to have their veterinarian assess the horse.

This creates an obvious conflict of interest. The person with an economic incentive to keep the horse working selects the veterinarian whose opinion ordinarily establishes that the horse may work.

“We know our horse best”

At the Council hearing, industry representative Christina Hansen was asked who decides whether a horse should stop working when something appears wrong.

Her answer was straightforward: the driver. “I mean, of course it is. We know our horse best,” and said she stops and calls veterinarian Dr. Gabriel Cook when she sees a problem.

Cook’s testimony showed why that first line of care still needs an independent backstop. When asked whether unhealthy horses had nevertheless worked, he said it had “probably happened.” He described occasions when owners disagreed with his judgment and intended to keep working a horse; in those situations, he said, his recourse was to call the DOHMH, which he had done several times.

DOHMH confirmed that not every medical incident involving a carriage horse must be reported to the Department. As a result, the agency does not maintain a complete count and may learn of an incident through a complaint, an NYPD referral or news coverage.

DOHMH also acknowledged that the Rental Horse Advisory Board created to advise the Health Commissioner had not issued recommendations in “many, many years.”

The system therefore begins with the people whose financial incentive is to keep the horses working, and it can also depend on them at several later steps: recognizing the concern, stopping work, seeking veterinary care and escalating a disagreement to the City.

Fragmented government oversight makes strong industry accountability essential to protecting equine welfare and public safety.

PART II — THE SAME PROBLEMS HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR YEARS

Repeated warnings and proposed solutions

Modern carriage-horse protections grew out of decades of horse deaths, safety incidents, audits and reform efforts. After three horses died during a 1982 heat wave, the Council criticized enforcement of the newly enacted horse-protection law and the failure to establish the required Rental Horse Advisory Board. Three more horses died during subsequent heat waves, prompting Local Law 89 of 1989, which recognized that operating horse-drawn carriages amid traffic congestion endangered horses and increased accident risks. By 2007, carriage owners and drivers were publicly identifying welfare and infrastructure concerns. In 2009, an advisory process considered stronger horse identification among other reforms. After Ryder, an elderly carriage horse whose August 2022 street collapse exposed a major discrepancy in his recorded age, industry representatives announced additional veterinary scrutiny, age verification, training and internal controls.

Carriage operations were also connected through shared stables, veterinarians, union representation, owner groups, coordinated testimony and public policy platforms. Those structures made consistent horse-by-horse practices possible.

The research identified problems that had been recognized before, and in many cases possible solutions had already been described publicly but not implemented.

Horse pulling a carriage in New York City, October 2026. Humane World for Animals staff photo

Industry proposals identified familiar oversight needs

The Big HEART Platform, introduced by industry representatives after Ryder's 2022 collapse and still cited in 2026, brought many of those concerns together. It called for more veterinary oversight and examinations, stronger training, hitching posts, heat protections, renewed advisory oversight and a retirement program.

The platform identifies many of the same weaknesses documented in this report. Some measures require City action. Others—including stronger internal records, age verification, veterinary follow-up, incident review and retirement safeguards—could have been adopted as consistent industry-wide practices without waiting for additional legislation.

> **"The industry's response has been to call for additional regulations funded by taxpayers, while also acknowledging that existing rules have not been consistently followed and require greater enforcement."**
>
> *— Brian Shapiro — NYC Council testimony, July 2026*

What stronger oversight would require

A substantially stronger oversight system would require greater independent equine veterinary capacity, more field inspection, integrated horse-owner-carriage-driver data, routine work-hour auditing, incident investigation, training oversight, retirement tracking and sustained enforcement.

Those measures could improve oversight. They would not eliminate the need for routine compliance and cooperation, nor could they eliminate a horse's flight response or human error which has led to tragedy in the form of both human and equine death.

PART III — WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THOSE PROTECTIONS WERE TESTED

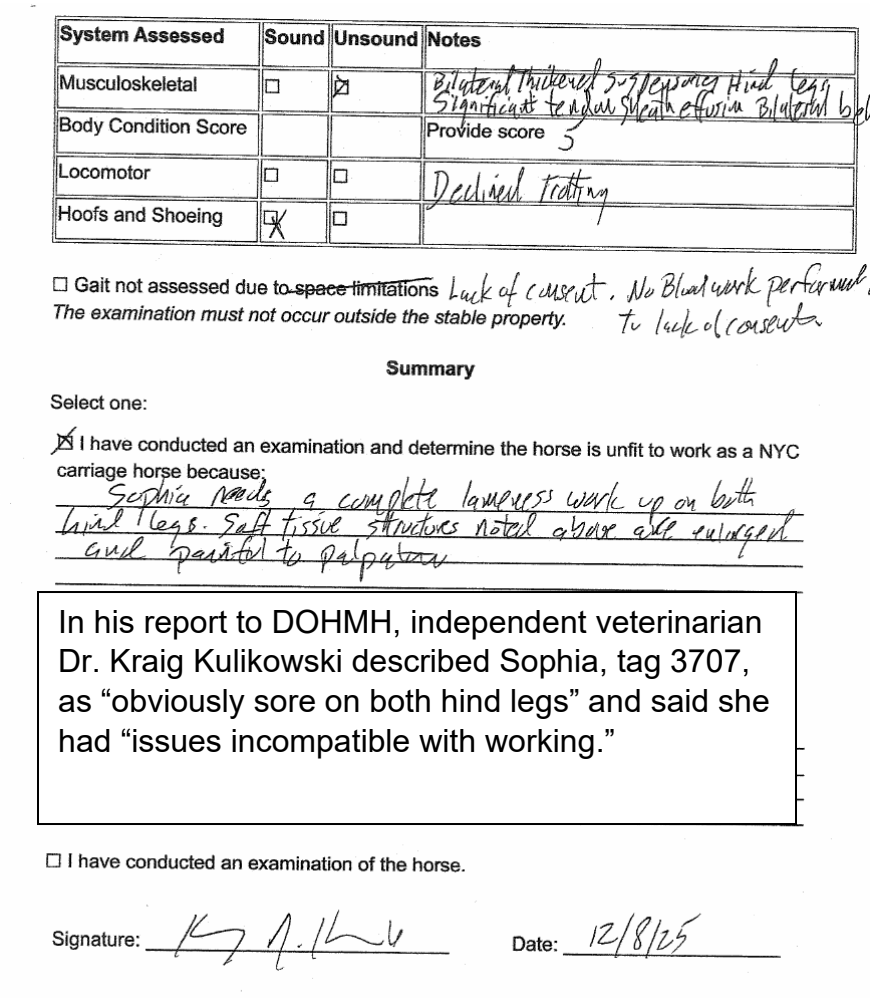
Independent veterinary review: a clear test of compliance and cooperation

Independent soundness testing exposed a gap in the system

The clearest test came in December 2025, when DOHMH retained independent equine veterinarian Dr. Kraig Kulikowski to examine active carriage horses. He evaluated 12 horses over Dec. 8 and 9.

Kulikowski said the most important part of a work-horse soundness examination is watching the horse move at a trot, as opposed to a walk, because some lameness appears only then. He also sought blood testing to rule out pain medication that could make an unsound horse appear sound.

The trot examinations and bloodwork were not completed because owner consent was not provided. Johnny Walker, tag 4356, was not presented even though Kulikowski reported that both the horse and owner were at the stable at the agreed time. Another horse was not presented because the owner or handler did not appear.



System Assessed	Sound	Unsound	Notes
Musculoskeletal	☐	☒	Bilateral thickened suspensory Hind legs Significant tendon sheath effusion Bilateral b
Body Condition Score			Provide score 5
Locomotor	☐	☐	Declined trotting
Hoofs and Shoeing	☒	☐	

☐ Gait not assessed due to ~~space limitations~~ Lack of consent. No Blood work performed. to lack of consent.
The examination must not occur outside the stable property.

Summary

Select one:

☒ I have conducted an examination and determine the horse is unfit to work as a NYC carriage horse because:
Sophia needs a complete lameness work up on both hind legs. Soft tissue structures noted above are enlarged and painful to palpation

☐ I have conducted an examination of the horse.

Signature: [illegible] Date: 12/8/25

In his report to DOHMH, independent veterinarian Dr. Kraig Kulikowski described Sophia, tag 3707, as “obviously sore on both hind legs” and said she had “issues incompatible with working.”

Kulikowski wrote that without a trot evaluation and drug screen he could not determine in good faith whether many of the horses were sound. Cook, the industry’s veterinarian, described essentially the same soundness standard. He testified that his complete examinations include trotting horses “to ensure soundness” and that a horse he finds unfit is suspended from work until healthy.

The two veterinarians were largely aligned on an important point: observing a horse at the trot is central to assessing soundness.

The oversight gap arose because the City-retained examiner could not complete that step or medication testing for the horses presented to him, and two additional horses were not presented at all. A uniform City examination loses much of its value if completion depends on case-by-case consent.

Yet even the incomplete examinations identified substantial concerns.

Kulikowski reported that most of the horses he examined had healed scars on their backs, which he attributed to previous improperly fitting tack. A significant number needed dental care. Some had musculoskeletal abnormalities. He also raised concerns about stall dimensions for large draft-type horses.

Sophia: familiarity is not a substitute for independent review

Sophia, tag 3707, was examined on Dec. 8, 2025. Kulikowski found significant abnormalities in both of her hind legs, including painful soft-tissue swelling, and formally marked her unfit to work as a New York City carriage horse. He called for a complete lameness workup.

In his report to DOHMH, Kulikowski was even more direct: Sophia was “obviously sore on both hind legs.” The records reviewed for this report do not establish what follow-up examination, if any, resolved Sophia’s findings.

At the Council hearing, a carriage driver said the horses receive “excellent care,” including veterinary examinations twice a year and regular dental and hoof care. The driver specifically named Sophia and Blackie as horses the drivers know intimately—their personalities, fears and preferences.

Blacky/Blackie, tag 3086, also appears in Kulikowski’s December examination records. He would not mark Blacky sound or unsound for locomotion because the trot examination and blood testing were not completed. Without those procedures, he wrote, he could not call the horse sound “in good faith.”

Destiny: an incomplete fitness assessment, then a runaway

The City identified Destiny as an older Standardbred mare. During her December 2025 independent examination, Kulikowski documented physical concerns, including scarring behind her withers and a musculoskeletal abnormality.

But he could not determine whether she was sound because the trot examination and bloodwork he considered necessary were not completed.

One month later, still in service, with no documented follow-up exam, Destiny ran into oncoming traffic at Sixth Avenue and West 59th Street. Police reportedly said she struck four or five vehicles before her carriage collided with a taxi hard enough to tear off its bumper.

The relevant question is not whether one caused the other.

The question is what the City’s protocol required when an independent veterinarian could not establish fitness—and whether that response was sufficient.

PART IV — HORSE IDENTITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Who is Sally? It should be simple

A 2009 New York City Comptroller audit found that DOHMH did not maintain an accurate list of licensed carriage horses and warned that the City could not be certain that every horse working was currently licensed and fit. Auditors recommended a current horse inventory and additional identifying criteria beyond tag numbers; the audit record also noted support for microchips.

Then Ryder collapsed on a Manhattan street in August 2022. Subsequent veterinary assessment indicated that he was about 26 years old, not the 13 years he was recorded to be. After Ryder’s death, industry representatives publicly announced greater scrutiny of horse ages and paperwork, and Dr. Gabriel Cook said his team was placing particular emphasis on verifying horses’ true ages against their physical characteristics and records.

In July 2026, Humane World for Animals staff photographed a mare working in Central Park with hoof number 4674 and permanent Standardbred freeze brand 6EN39. Cross-checking those identifiers against City and breed-registry records identified her as Sally and raised questions that should be straightforward to answer.

Who is Sally? How old is she? Is she currently licensed to work? Who is responsible for her?

Sally, tag 4674, photographed working in July 2026. Her permanent freeze brand 6EN39 is visible. Photo Credit: Tyler Lambert, Humane World for Animals.

What the records show

City horse record: Sally, tag 4674; bay Standardbred mare; born 2017 making her nine years old as of publication.

City status: EXPIRED.

City owner entry: “Celtic Hansom Cab.”

July 2026 photograph: hoof number 4674 and Standardbred freeze brand 6EN39 are visible while the horse is in harness.

Standardbred identification: freeze brand 6EN39 corresponds to DONTSQZTHECHARMIN, a bay mare foaled May 18, 2007. The registry description of her markings corresponds with the photographed horse.

If these records refer to the same mare, Sally was 19—not nine—when photographed being worked in July 2026.

The ownership trail is also difficult to follow. DCWP records reviewed identify two similarly named carriage-owner entities:

Celtic Hansom Carriage Corp. — plate 1103, license 1127447-DCA

Celtic Handsome Cab Co. Ltd. — plate 1089, license 1370655-DCA

Both licenses were listed as expired in 2022.

Updated City records may establish Sally's current licensing and ownership, including any subsequent changes. The more consequential finding is the ten-year discrepancy between her recorded age and permanent identification, raising questions about the accuracy of the records used to identify horses and assess their fitness for work.

> ***“Every horse has a name and a story. The records should tell us who they are, who is responsible for them and whether they are being protected.”***
>
> *— Chelsea Perez, Senior Program Manager, Equine Protection, Humane World for Animals*

These are essential details. Age informs veterinary assessment, workload and retirement decisions. License status determines whether a horse may legally work. Ownership establishes accountability.

Horse identification and licensing were flagged in 2009. Age verification became a renewed industry priority after Ryder in 2022. **In 2026, records still leave basic questions about the identity, age, license status and responsibility for a horse photographed working in harness.**

Registry snapshot March 2026

99	**55**	**154**
CURRENT	**RENEWAL PENDING**	**CURRENT + PENDING**
Horse records	Status not defined in the production	Potentially active universe
19	**1**	**13**
MISSING STABLE	**2025 BIRTH YEAR**	**EXPIRED**
Current/pending records with blank stable field	Blaze Sultan, tag 4722, marked CURRENT	Including Sally, tag 4674

What the registry cannot show by itself

- No license issue date, expiration date, original NYC intake/service date or disposition/status-change date for individual horses.
- No linked driver, carriage plate or medallion assignment for each horse.
- No horse-specific record of work hours, rest periods or daily rotation.
- No record showing which horse worked with which driver and carriage at any given time.
- The status “RENEWAL PENDING” is not defined, so the dataset alone does not establish whether those horses may work while renewal is pending.

Capacity, workload and a rising incident rate

Earlier City audits and industry reports routinely identified more than 200 horses in New York City carriage service. By contrast, the 2026 registry lists 99 CURRENT horses, or 154 if RENEWAL PENDING records are included.

Those figures alone do not prove that individual horses are being overworked. But when the number of horses in service appears substantially lower than in prior years, reliable horse-by-horse records of work hours, rest, rotation and fitness become increasingly important—especially as serious incidents continue.

In July 2026 the Manhattan Borough President’s Office released a report on 44 years of carriage-horse incident records with findings that the annual incident rate had more than quadrupled. Working with a Columbia University mathematics professor, the office projected approximately 16 to 30 additional carriage incidents by 2030 if current patterns continue, with as many as 11 additional horse deaths. Among documented runaway incidents, a driver, passenger or bystander was injured about half the time.

“In all my years driving, I never saw this many accidents happen so often.”
— Anita McGill, former New York City carriage driver and stable owner

Ownership records: a clear answer in testimony, a difficult chain in City data

Francesco Riccobono gave the Council a clear description of his operation: “Today I own three carriages, I care and own for 13 horses.” The City’s records make that answer difficult to independently verify because ownership and operating rights appear across individual names, name variants and several business entities.

Riccobono-linked horses appear under Francesco Riccobono, Giuseppe Riccobono and name variants, while carriage operating rights appear under a cluster of business names. Records reviewed by Humane World include Riccobono Tours Inc., NYC Horse Carriage Rides Est 1979 Inc., Amazing Grace Carriage Company Inc. and F & A Carriage Corp. Three are active entities who use the same public phone number, and two are newer companies

that received 2025 operating rights transferred from licenses previously associated with Riccobono Tours/NYC Horse Carriage Rides.

Amazing Grace is a useful example. DOHMH records list a horse named Amazing Grace under Francesco Riccobono. Amazing Grace Carriage Company Inc. is also the name of a newer carriage-owner entity that received an operating right transferred from a Riccobono-linked license.

None of this suggests that Riccobono's statement was inaccurate or that the related businesses are improper. The oversight issue is more basic: the City's records do not provide a simple current chain linking each horse to an owner, company, carriage plate, driver and workday. A regulatory system should be able to reproduce a straightforward ownership answer without extensive cross-referencing.

A current registry is necessary, but it is not the same as a complete compliance system.

The records reviewed do not consistently connect identity, fitness, ownership, carriage assignment, driver, workday and retirement status at the horse level.

A horse-level system should answer, immediately: Who is this horse? Are they cleared to work? Who is responsible? How many hours did they work and rest? What happened after a medical finding, incident or retirement?

An organized industry working with horses every day should be able to answer those questions without extensive cross-referencing.

PART V — SERIOUS INCIDENTS TEST WHETHER THE SYSTEM WORKS

When something goes wrong, the records should tell the story

Deniz: a work-hours protection that should be easy to verify

City law also limits how long a carriage horse may work.

The work-hour question is separate from the reported cause of Deniz's death. It nevertheless provides a direct test of whether the City can verify compliance with the nine-hour work limit.

Deniz collapsed and died in Central Park while pulling passengers. A necropsy reportedly attributed his death to yew toxicosis following ingestion of the poisonous plant. The Central Park Conservancy subsequently criticized the circumstances surrounding his death and reiterated its support for ending carriage operations.

At the July Council hearing, longtime Central Park pedicab driver and tour guide testified that Deniz remained out later than he ordinarily should have on the day he died. She described approximately 5 p.m. as the normal horse change and said Deniz was still in the park afterward.

City law requires records capable of establishing when a horse left the stable and when they returned.

So how many hours had Deniz actually been out that day?

The records should answer that.

Humane World requested DCWP records showing enforcement of carriage-horse work-hour limits, including horse work logs and rest periods. The agency produced hundreds of pages of inspection and enforcement records, but no horse-specific work-hour records showing when individual horses worked or rested. The production therefore provides no visibility into, or way to verify, compliance with the nine-hour limit horse by horse.

A work-hour protection is meaningful only if the City can readily demonstrate how compliance is checked.

A safety system that cannot eliminate a horse's flight response

Several industry participants sincerely argued that stronger regulation—more enforcement, training, hitching posts and improved infrastructure—could make carriage operations safer.

Industry testimony itself illustrates the limits of training. Hansen described carriage horses as accustomed to the city but also acknowledged individual triggers—some horses react to particular dogs or wheeled objects; others dislike garbage trucks.

Those observations reflect a basic feature of equine behavior: training can reduce fear responses, but it does not eliminate the underlying nature or flight response of horses.

Sampson: a known rule, a fatal incident

Eighteen-year-old Romanch Mahajan died after Sampson bolted during a carriage ride in June 2026. Council and industry accounts differed on whether the driver still controlled the reins immediately before the runaway. The Committee report noted the continuous-rein rule and said the driver's license was suspended.

The industry temporarily halted operations after Sampson's fatal runaway and reportedly retrained drivers on existing safety rules, including maintaining control of horses. Yet testimony at the July Council hearing described horses continuing to be left unattended even after that retraining. One witness said she observed about 10 unattended horses the day after the industry announced its new safety measures; an industry witness separately said she was still reminding drivers daily to hold and properly attend their horses.

Training can reinforce a rule; it cannot guarantee that the rule will always be followed or that a horse will remain controllable if something goes wrong.

Separately, the records leave another question unanswered. Retiring Sampson was an appropriate response after the fatal incident. But his disposition record, obtained by leading coalition partner Voters For Animal Rights, simply lists him as "retired" effective June 18, 2026, with no information about where he went, who assumed responsibility for him, or what happened afterward.

PART VI — RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD NOT END WHEN THE WORK DOES

Who is responsible for the horses after retirement?

Industry representatives have warned that ending carriage operations could expose horses to auction and slaughter. But the records show that the risk does not begin with a phaseout. Former New York City carriage horses have already surfaced in the livestock-auction system after leaving service.

A 2013 study tracking City horse-registration records documented hundreds of horses entering and leaving the carriage-horse registry over several years. Once a horse disappeared from the City's records, however, the record generally did not establish where the horse went or what ultimately happened to them. The study reported on horses that surfaced at a horse auction connected to selling horses to the horse slaughter trade and were ultimately rescued and adopted.

More recently, in 2024, Bernard surfaced at a Pennsylvania livestock auction and was purchased by a horse rescuer before being placed in sanctuary.

Humane World found no binding, industry-wide system that tracked each horse through transfer and retirement or guaranteed safe placement after leaving carriage service.

Horses at New Holland Sales Stables in Pennsylvania. Humane World for Animals staff photo.

No system followed horses from carriage service through transfer and retirement. The fact that some were ultimately rescued does not resolve that gap. For many others who disappeared from City records without later coming to public attention, the records reviewed do not show where they went.

> **“Humane World for Animals and other rescue organizations stand ready to help ensure these horses are safely retired and do not end up at slaughter.”**
>
> *— Brian Shapiro — NYC Council testimony, July 2026*

The proposed phaseout would prohibit transfer for slaughter or into another carriage operation and create clearer responsibility for next steps for the horses. Humane World and partner rescue and sanctuary organizations have pledged to help secure safe placements.

The deeper question is whether this use of horses still belongs in New York

There is a relationship with horses available to New Yorkers, and the millions of visitors to Central Park, that honors both the people who have worked in the carriage trade and the horses whose welfare the City is responsible for protecting.

Horses have an extraordinary place in New York’s history.

Horses carried people and goods, powered commerce and helped build the city long before motor vehicles transformed its streets. That history deserves recognition.

Yet today’s carriage trade represents only one narrow commercial use of horses. It should not define New York City’s relationship with them.

The New York of working carriage horses is not the New York in which horses were once an essential form of transportation.

Credited to The Brown Brothers, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Modern Manhattan is a landscape of buses, cars, emergency vehicles, bicycles, construction, sirens and millions of people moving through intensely shared public space.

The regulatory system built around carriage horses has become increasingly elaborate in part because the modern environment creates risks that are difficult to eliminate through rules alone.

Those risks are ultimately borne by the horses and by the people around them.

Destiny, Sophia, Deniz and Sampson each illustrate a different part of that problem: incomplete health information, a finding of unfitness, a fatal collapse and a fatal runaway.

Sally's records raise an even more basic oversight question: can the City reliably identify the horse standing in harness, confirm their age and license status, and identify the responsible owner and operating entity?

Ending horse-drawn carriage operations does not erase New York's history with horses.

It recognizes that history is not an obligation to keep asking horses to perform the same role after the city around them has fundamentally changed.

New York can provide meaningful transition assistance to drivers and stable workers. It can require enforceable protections against slaughter and transfer into another carriage operation. It can ensure transparent, humane placement of the horses.

Photo credit: Jennifer Kunz, Humane World for Animals.

Horses are social, movement-oriented animals. The final question is not whether New York should remember its history with horses, but how it chooses to treat horses now.

Even the strongest oversight cannot regulate away a horse's biology or guarantee human judgment or skill when working with an animal. Nor can it promise that another runaway, collapse or overlooked health problem will not occur.

After nearly two decades of audits, reforms and enforcement handoffs, this report concludes that New York should not ask horses to rely on a regulatory system that has repeatedly struggled to provide clear, independent assurance. A humane transition can respect the livelihoods and relationships involved while ending a commercial use whose risks the City has never been able to fully control.

About this report

This report evaluates how New York City's carriage-horse oversight system functions in practice. It is based on New York City records, City Council testimony, independent veterinary examination records, City Comptroller audits, industry and union statements and reports and other source materials. The report was prepared by Chelsea Perez, Senior Program Manager, Equine Protection, Humane World for Animals