

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009
CITY HALL – NEW YORK, NY

New York City Council
Committee on Consumer Affairs
Public Hearing on Int. 658-A & Int. 653-A

The Humane Society of the United States
Testimony in Support of Int. 658-A and in Opposition to Int. 653-A

Thank you to the members of the Consumer Affairs Committee and Councilman Avella for this invitation and opportunity for The Humane Society of the United States to testify at this hearing on Int. 658-A and Int. 653-A.

I'm Patrick Kwan, New York state director for The Humane Society of the United States. With over 10.5 million members and supporters – or one in every thirty Americans – including over 217,000 New York City residents, The Humane Society of the United States is the largest animal protection organization in the nation.

Our New York office is located near Central Park South where we witness firsthand every day how mixing horses and city traffic are an inhumane and dangerous combination.

Carriage horses often work in oppressive and inhumane weather conditions, including in the sweltering heat and extreme cold. I trust that many of us here remember the first blistering ice and snow storm this season that covered the city over the weekend of December 19th, just before Christmas.

The horses were forced to work – despite the bitter cold, despite the icy, dangerous and slippery conditions, and despite current laws that say they should not have been out on the streets working and competing in the traffic with emergency vehicles.

The status quo is not protecting the lives and welfare of the horses, drivers, tourists, or New Yorkers.

It's also been a year and a half since City Comptroller Bill Thompson released an independent audit documenting the inhumane conditions carriage horses live and work in, yet the abuse continues. The report found horses are not provided with enough water, risk overheating on hot asphalt and are forced to stand in their own waste because of inadequate drainage in stables.

We support efforts to improve the conditions of the horses, and we again urge the City of New York to take immediate action on the Comptroller's recommendations that these horses be provided with adequate amounts of water and protection from the elements.

But meeting these most basic of needs is just the beginning.

Horses deserve better treatment than to be forced to work in dangerous traffic conditions every day, and often in harsh weather, where their lives and welfare are threatened and the safety of pedestrians and drivers are put at risk.

The Humane Society of the United States urges the City Council to protect horses and public safety by supporting Int. 658-A and opposing Int. 653-A which will weaken enforcement of current laws.