



TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION

OF GREATER NEW YORK • AFL-CIO • LOCAL 100

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May 2, 2023

Dear Council Member,

TWU Local 100 would like to share this message regarding the Central Park carriage horses from Dr. Gabriel Cook, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) and Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons (DACVS).

Since late August, Dr. Cook has been Transport Workers Union Local 100's equine medicine expert and consultant. Dr. Cook is a partner of the New England Equine Practice, which has its own equine hospital, and a sizable staff of equine medical professionals. He is now the lead veterinarian used by a majority of the drivers and horse-carriage owners providing Central Park tours.

Transport Workers Union Local 100, Richard Davis, President



Statement from Dr. Cook, Equine Veterinarian, DVM, DACVS

There have been many positive developments regarding the Central Park Carriage horses that I strongly believe are worth noting. First, let me say, that the thesis, advanced by some, that these horses are not cared for is simply erroneous.

Since this past summer, we have implemented multiple safeguards, treatments, protocols, and additional veterinary oversight to supplement existing city rules and regulations. My staff and I, for example, are at the stables every other week to conduct regularly scheduled physical exams, and to address any horse-related concerns brought to us by the carriage drivers and owners.

All exams are focused on ensuring the horses are absolutely sound and fit to work. All exams are focused on ensuring the horses are absolutely sound and fit to work. We also put great emphasis on verifying the true ages of horses by closely scrutinizing their physical attributes against the ages reported on pre-existing paperwork, such as their bills of sale.

In the fall, TWU Local 100 formed a Safety Committee of drivers and oversaw the election of shop stewards from each of the three stables. These committee members and stewards also bring issues to our attention and seek professional medical input.

When my medical team is not at the stables, we frequently talk to drivers about potential problems over the telephone – and provide Telehealth consultation that can include reviewing video of individual horses.

We have identified horses with issues and followed approved protocols, such as prescribing changes in their diet, additional rest, dental care, medication, further testing and evaluations. We have identified horses with signs of colic (a very common ailment among horses that can range in severity) and they were sent directly to the New England Equine Practice hospital for care.

The owners and drivers I have interacted with have overwhelmingly been cooperative and have demonstrated genuine concern for their animals. When we go to the stables every other week, we perform annual or bi-annual exams on individual horses as needed. These are mandated by city law. We often then spend hours answering drivers' and owners' questions and assessing their animals even if they are not due for their required annual or bi-annual physicals.

With over 130 carriage horses in New York City, there will always be health situations to address. As long as they are addressed, and treated appropriately, an acceptable standard of care is met.

Can more be done? Of course. But you should be assured that there is a genuine ongoing effort to provide the best care possible for the carriage horses, building upon the existing and extensive city regulations and protocols and oversight.

I'd be more than happy to discuss these issues with you further, and invite you to visit while I'm at the stables.

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**A short note from TWU Local 100 Executive
Director of Organizing, Frank McCann**

If a member of the public has a concern about a horse, he or she can report it to the Department of Health, which investigates. We welcome genuine reports of concern. Many complaints prove to be unfounded, but when necessary, the DOH directs veterinary examinations be undertaken by an equine veterinarian and appropriate treatment be provided.

Drivers also, on their own, will take a horse exhibiting unusual behavior back to the barn for evaluation. This is not new. This is longstanding protocol. Our horses have been visited and examined by countless equestrians and equine veterinarians over the decades.

It's not uncommon for a horse – whether it gives leisurely tours of Central Park, races at the track, gives recreational rides on a trail, or jumps in the ring in competition – to have a medical issue come up. That can range from a sore fetlock (ankle) to colic (abdominal pain) to a toothache. There are extensive NYC rules and regulations in place. Still, we are actively engaged in improving the oversight and care of our beloved Central Park horses, and continue to work on implementing the elements of our BIG HEART platform.