

Should NYC ban horse carriages?

*Here's what 44
years of data
shows.*



The Evidential Argument for Passing Romanch's Law

July 15, 2026

Times Square was once Longacre Square. Its blocks were lined with blacksmiths and stables where horses were shod, and it was the home of the Vanderbilt's American Horse Exchange. But the city grew too dense, too loud, and too mechanized, and the horses were pushed out. That was more than a century ago. The city today is far more crowded, far noisier, and far more chaotic than anything Longacre Square ever saw. Still, the horse carriage industry attempts to operate on the busiest pathways in Central Park, the third most visited tourist attraction in the world.

Today we are reckoning not only with an industry many say needs to be more tightly regulated, if not outlawed altogether, but the death of a young man, Romanch Mahajan, who came to New York with his family for what was supposed to be the trip of a lifetime, and who fairly assumed, along with his family, that when they took a city-regulated tourist ride, it would be safe. This was an avoidable tragedy; one no family should ever have to face. On June 17, 2026, Romanch Mahajan was killed when a carriage horse spooked and bolted down West Drive, slamming into and flipping another carriage. It was the first carriage-related human death in the known record, and the eighth horse-related incident in or around the park in the preceding thirteen months.

The tragedy should not have been a surprise. Across the incidents we have on record going back to 1982, a runaway carriage horse has hurt a bystander just under half the time. Just days earlier, a 16-year-old horse named Deniz collapsed and died on West Drive with two passengers still in the cab. Last September, a horse named Bambi bolted through the park, throwing her driver to the ground and forcing passengers to jump from the moving carriage. In 2022, a horse named Ryder collapsed emaciated in traffic and died months later.

The death of anyone, especially a young person, should be enough to demand change. But any decision to change an industry that has operated in this city for generations needs to be made with care and with evidence. So we took a step back and looked at the sober statistics around this issue. We reviewed available public records, including from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), for reports of carriage-horse incidents in or around Central Park going back to 1982.

We found evidence of 96 serious carriage horse incidents, including human injuries, and 40 horse deaths. Notably, the incident rate has more than quadrupled between 1982 and 2026, with around half of those incidents resulting in a horse death. In incidents where a horse escapes its carriage, the records analyzed show that a person is hurt around half the time. This trend is getting worse. In the last thirteen months, there were eight recorded incidents. This is more than two times the typical pace of incidents since 2019.

These concerning records left us wondering what we might expect to see in future years if nothing changes. So we collaborated with a Professor from Columbia University on a forecast model based on our dataset. Our forecast showed that, if the documented pattern holds, we

could see sixteen to thirty more carriage incidents by 2030, likely several with human injuries, and upwards of eleven more horse deaths.

Our incident list, which is likely itself incomplete, is listed in the appendix of this piece. Assembling even that much was much harder than it should be. There is no reliable public record of these incidents and deaths. We had to stitch together the list from animal-advocacy compilations, public reporting, and limited records from DOHMH.

Horses are not city animals. When they are placed in an environment filled with pedestrians, sirens, e-bikes, crowds, delivery vehicles, and construction noise, they can startle and consequently can pose a serious risk themselves and those around them.

New Yorkers have been noticing. A recent public opinion poll by Zenith Research found that 68% of respondents supported ending horse-drawn carriages in New York City. We also looked at the 311 complaints filed under the City's animal-abuse category that name a horse since 2020. Of 175 such complaints citywide, 117 of them, 66.9%, were filed within one or two blocks of Central Park or by one of the two licensed carriage stables in Hell's Kitchen. In the complaints, callers most often reported neglect or torture. In 18.3% of cases, the City recorded some enforcement action. Animal-abuse complaints citywide had a 28% enforcement rate. New Yorkers also filed 92 complaints against the carriage trade itself with the City's consumer-protection agency over that same period. It is important to note that, like with all 311 data, the labels reflect what concerned New Yorkers reported rather than any sort of adjudications by any agency.

It is clear that the status-quo is not acceptable. That is why I joined my colleagues in cosponsoring City Council Intro. 943, called Romanch's Law, which would wind down the horse-drawn carriage industry.

But any serious case for winding this industry down has to reckon with the hundreds of workers who will be at risk of losing their livelihood. The City has an obligation to collaborate with them on finding a professional landing. Intro. 943 directs the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) to build a workforce transition program. It is crucial the City Council and DCWP ensure this program is funded and staffed before drivers lose their routes.

Intro. 943 also prohibits selling or transferring any horse for slaughter or into another city's carriage business. Last September, two dozen equine rescues and sanctuaries offered to place every horse this industry retires. The City must work with that coalition to ensure a smooth and safe transition.

The horse-drawn carriage industry has operated in New York City for generations; yet the record makes clear it cannot continue to operate as it has. Ninety-six documented incidents, forty horse deaths, and now the city's first carriage-related human death indicate that the risk of harms in this industry are only growing. Intro. 943 is a responsible path forward. If passed, it would wind down the industry on a fixed timeline, protect horses from slaughter or resale into another carriage trade, and fund job transition resources for drivers depending on this type of work.

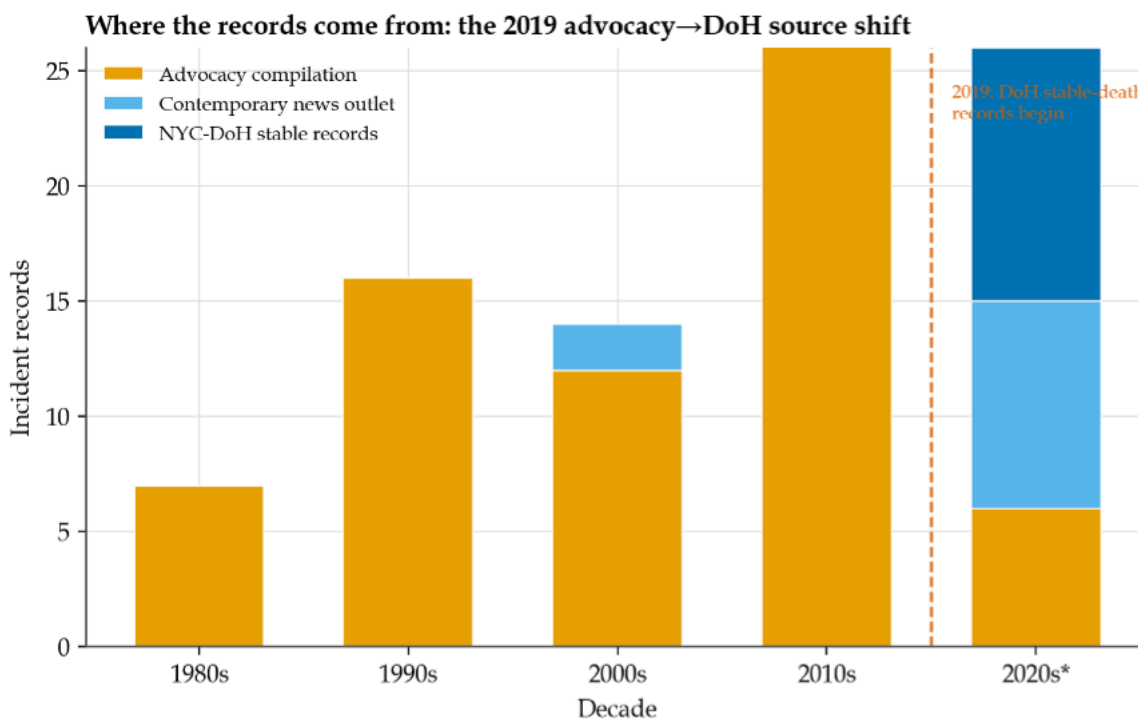
The City must act now.

Appendix

Part 1: What the Data Shows

To develop this analysis, we curated a list of 96 incident records between August 4, 1982 and June 17, 2026. These incidents were represented three general kinds of sources: a compilation kept by the Coalition to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages (banhdc.org), contemporary news coverage, and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's own licensing registry. Because no city agency has released an official public database of these incidents, we were unable to independently verify each incident, nor the full incident history.

Notably, the types of record shift significantly in 2019. Until 2018, nearly incident records comes from the advocacy compilation, some of which were then corroborated with public reporting; since 2019, DOHMH's stable-death records and news outlets can confirm most of the records. Some of the difference between the 2010s and the 2020s reflects an actual increase in incidents; some of it is simply a result of the record being more visible than it used to be.

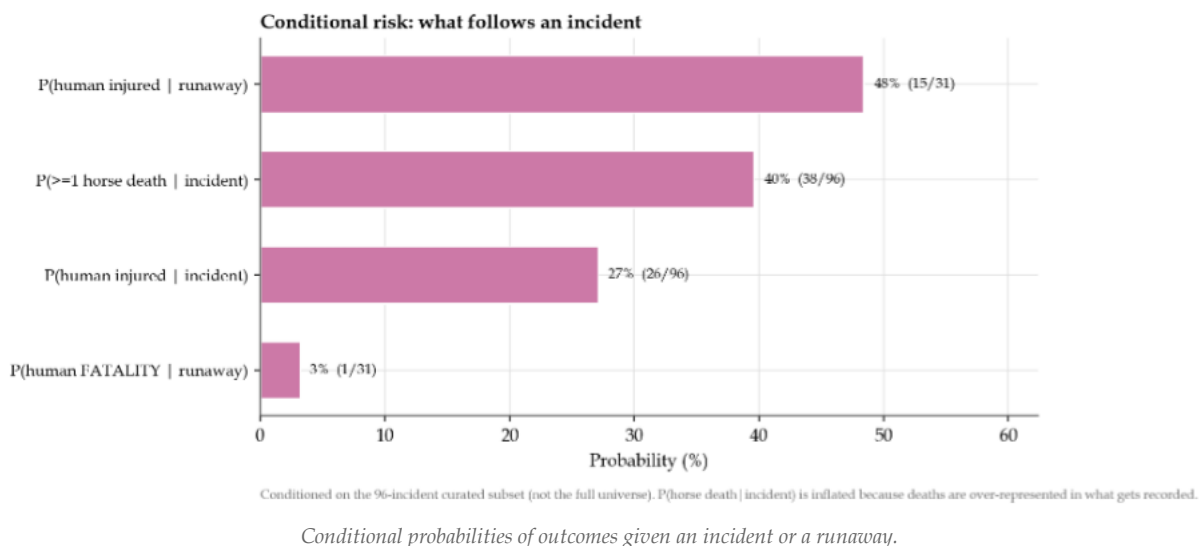


*2020s through June 17, 2026. No mandatory accident reporting exists; counts are a merged advocacy+news+DoH compilation, not a registry.

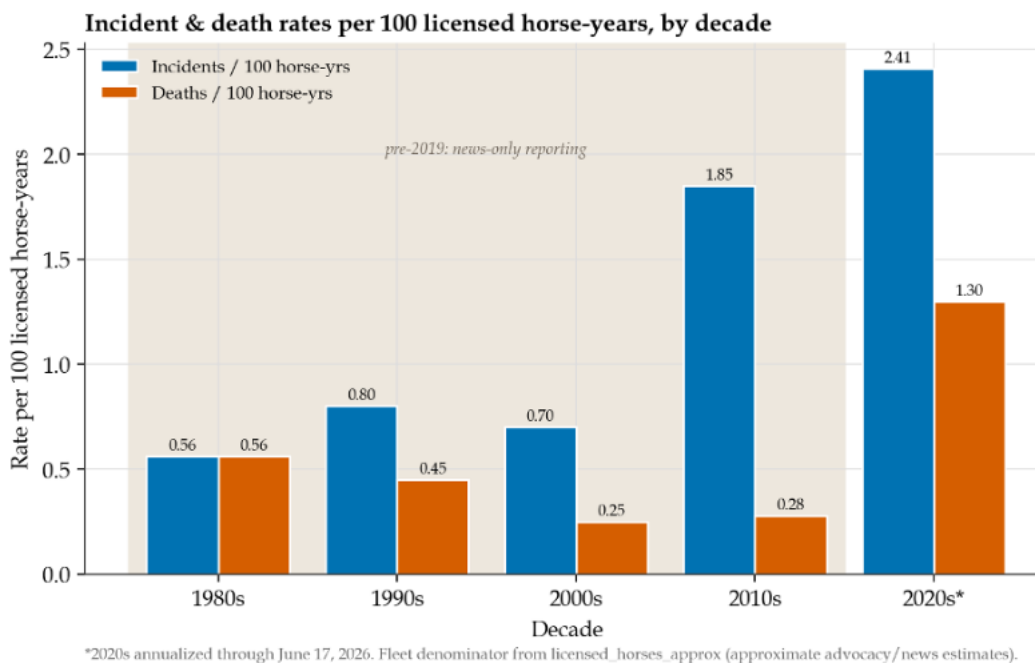
*Records by source group and decade. *2020s through June 17, 2026.*

The clearest and, arguably, most consequential number in this dataset is rate of injury to people. Of 31 recorded runaways (where a horse broke loose and bolted), 15 ended with a bystander, driver, or passenger injured. And one ended in a death. On June 17, 2026, an 18-year-old tourist was killed when a carriage horse spooked near Cherry Hill, broke free down West Drive, and slammed into another carriage near Tavern on the Green. It was the first fatality on record. Even when we widened the lens from runaways to every incident in the record, we found that a

person was hurt in just over a quarter of them. At least one horse died in about two in five incidents (38 of 96). As with many incomplete datasets, relative rates are skewed by selection bias. A death is more likely to be publicized than an incident that ended without harm.

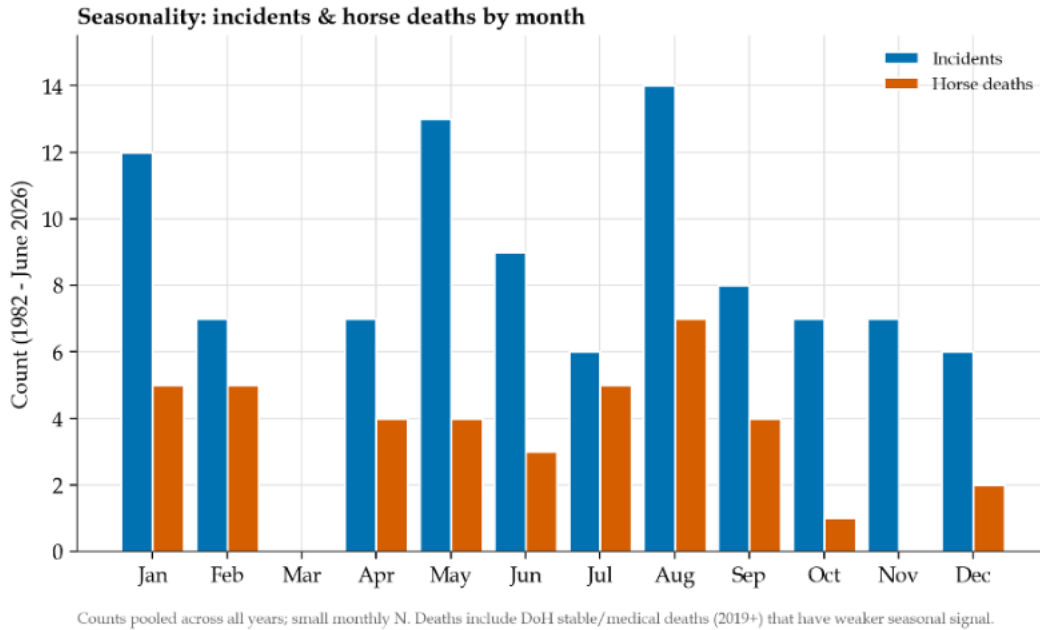


To understand the significance of this data, we normalized for the size of the fleet. In this analysis, one horse-year means one horse licensed to work for one year;. We used horse years as the denominator for a rate so that a decade with more horses on the street isn't unfairly compared to one with fewer. After normalizing for fleet size, our analysis showed that incidents per 100 licensed horse-years have climbed steadily, from roughly 0.7 from the 1980s through the early 2000s to 1.85 in the 2010s and 2.41 in the 2020s to date. The death rate appears to triple in the 2020s, hitting 1.30 per 100 horse-years. However, much of that jump is likely due to DOHMH's stable-death records becoming public after 2019 rather than horses actually dying at a higher rate.

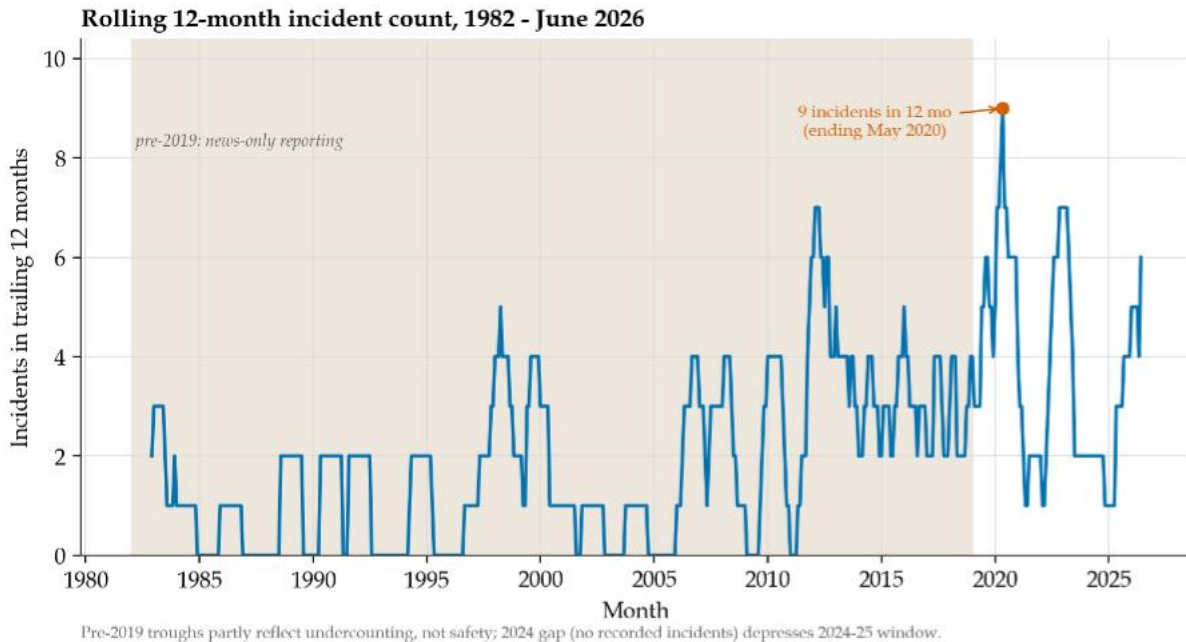


Incident and death rates per 100 licensed horse-years, by decade.

Street incidents also seem to cluster seasonally, in more extreme weather months, peaking in August, May, and January. Horse deaths also peak in August and July. A few of these deaths were explicitly related to heat in the record.



Incidents and horse deaths by month, pooled 1982 - June 2026.



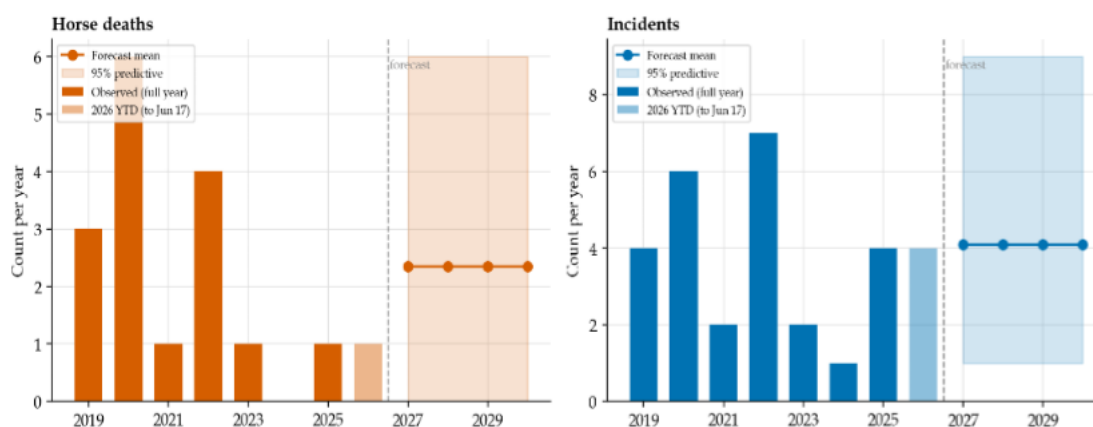
Incidents in the trailing 12 months, 1982 - June 2026.

The forecast to 2030 if nothing changes

To determine what we might see if the status-quo does not change, we applied a status-quo forecast to the 30 incidents and 17 horse deaths recorded since 2019, a subset of the full record that we trust to be most complete due to more reliable DOHMH records and steady news coverage. Assuming the industry holds to its current size, our forecast suggests we could see around 4 incidents and 2-3 horse deaths each year moving forward. Applied to the rest of the decade, that would come to around 22 horse deaths and 40 incidents in the 2020s.

Horizon	Incidents (95% interval)	Horse deaths (95% interval)
Rest of 2026 (June 18 to December 31)	~2.2 (0 to 6)	~1.3 (0 to 4)
Each full year, 2027 to 2030	~4.1 (1 to 9)	~2.3 (0 to 6)
2027 to 2030 cumulative	~16 (8 to 27)	~11 (4 to 20)
2020s decade total (observed + projected)	~40 (32 to 50)	~22 (16 to 30)

Status-quo forecast, fit on the post-2019 reporting window



Constant-rate Bayesian Poisson (Jeffreys prior); bands are 95% posterior-predictive. Assumes no policy change and a stable ~190-horse fleet. 2024's near-zero (one recorded incident) is an undercount, which makes the fitted rate conservative.

Status-quo forecast fit on the post-2019 reporting window; observed counts in solid bars, forecast means and 95% posterior-predictive bands to 2030.

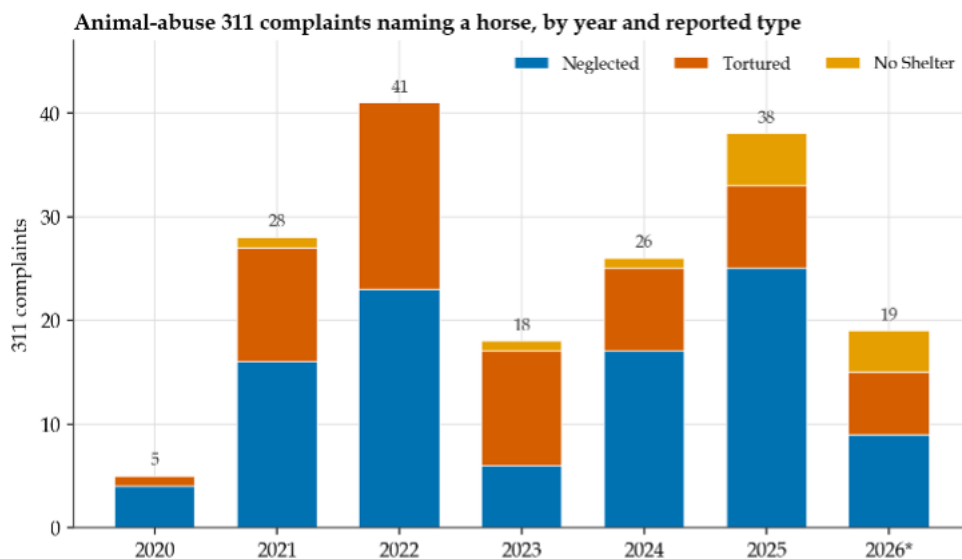
Horse deaths do not show any upward trend within the smaller window. But street incidents run nearly double the post-2019 average pace in the past thirteen months, with 7.4 incidents versus 4.0 a year. If the 7.4 incident pace holds, we could see closer to 30 incidents between 2027 and 2030. (A model using the larger window would predict roughly 16 incidents.)

We modeled these numbers using a constant-rate Bayesian Poisson process, which is a standard statistical model for rare, roughly independent events. To do so, we started with a Jeffreys prior, a standard starting assumption, and reported a Negative-Binomial posterior-predictive interval, which accounts for the uncertainty of the true underlying rate and typical year-to-year randomness.

Part 2: What New Yorkers Reported to 311 and DCWP

New Yorkers filed 175 animal-abuse complaints to 311 since 2020 that specifically name a horse. 117 were filed in close proximity to Central Park (within around two streets and one avenue), or at one of the two licensed stables in Hell's Kitchen. The complaint volume rose from just a

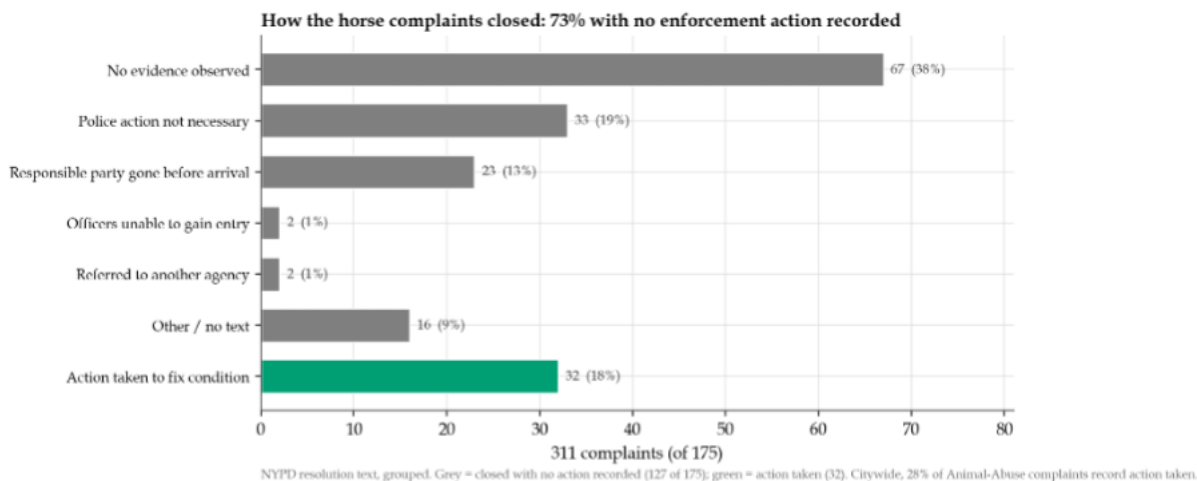
handful in 2020 to more than twenty complaints in most years since. 100 complaints reported neglect, 63 reported torture, and 12 reported lack of shelter. Of complaints in proximity to Central Park or the stables, callers reported 63 incidents of neglect, 49 of torture, and 5 of lack of shelter. Importantly, as noted earlier, the labels only describe what a caller reported, and do not represent an independent finding adjudicated by the City.



NYC OpenData 311 (ern2-nwe9), full-text "horse" within complaint type Animal-Abuse. *2026 partial (through 22 Jun). Type = what the caller reported, not an agency finding.

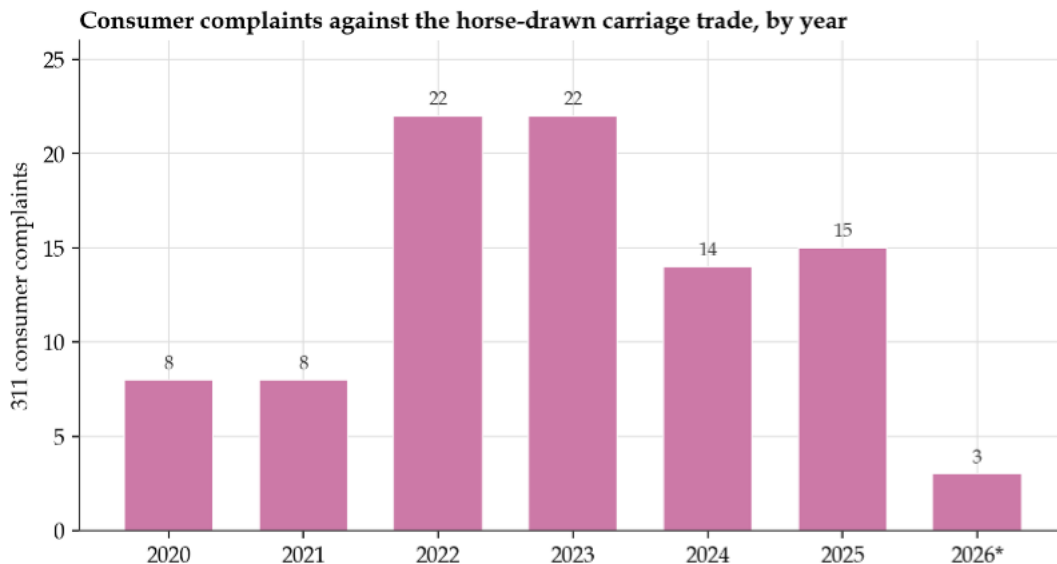
*Animal-abuse 311 complaints naming a horse, by year and reported type. *2026 partial, through June 22.*

127 complaints had no recorded enforcement action. They were most often logged as “no evidence of the violation observed” (67) or “police action not necessary” (33). 23 complaints were closed because the caller left before officers arrived on scene. The rate of enforcement, 18.3% of complaints, is notably lower than the 28% enforcement rate for all 54,562 animal-abuse complaints citywide since 2020. Importantly, a complaint closed with no recorded action primarily reflects what an officer could observe or document on arrival, and not necessarily that nothing was wrong.



Recorded resolution of the 175 horse complaints, grouped from the responding agency's closing text.

New Yorkers have also filed 92 complaints against the carriage trade with DCWP since 2020, logged as “Horse-Drawn Cab” and “Horse Drawn Carriage.” Nearly all of them, 89 of 92, were filed in Manhattan. The Clinton Park stable on West 52nd Street is the most cited address in the complaints.



NYC OpenData 311 (erm2-nwe9), descriptors "Horse-Drawn Cab" and "Horse Drawn Carriage," filed with consumer-protection (DCWP/DCA). *2026 partial.

*Consumer complaints against the horse-drawn carriage trade, by year. *2026 partial, through June 22.*

Part 3: Incident Dataset

Unfortunately, there is no single public record of carriage-horse incidents or deaths in New York City, and we could not find a central source that documents incidents with consistent and full detail. Therefore, our dataset was compiled with various kinds of records available to the public. The Coalition to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages (banhdc.org) and carriagehorsesnyc.blogspot.com, both self-described as incomplete, account for most of our incidents recorded before 2019. Contemporary news coverage and DOHMH’s licensing registry, run March 11, 2026, which lists licensed carriage horses back to 1990 and flags those reported deceased, account for much of the post-2019 record.

By merging the three, we could produce a fuller count (96 incidents and 40 horse deaths) than any could provide on their own. But it is certainly a floor and not a full accounting. We can be certain that an unknown number of incidents and deaths have gone unrecorded through the years. Of the incidents recorded, details, including names and ages, are not always complete or consistent. The descriptions of incidents also range in detail and reliability, from a full Cornell necropsy (Deniz, Lady) to one-line news mentions. The table below is the complete underlying dataset

Year	Horse	Incident Description	Human injury	Horse deaths
1982	Unnamed (3 horses)	Three horses died of heat stroke on 98°F day; counted as 3 horse deaths in totals	—	3

1982	Maggio	Collapsed at Central Park South; cause not specified	—	1
1983	Unnamed	Horse spooked by New Year fireworks; galloped into runners; injuries include broken bones/concussions/contusions	Serious	—
1983	Dennis	Died during holiday season from overwork and poor nutrition	—	1
1985	Chester	Chester sideswiped at Rockefeller Center; jumped onto car hood; second horse broke loose at 48th & Broadway; 4 tourists injured; Chester euthanized	Minor	1
1988	Whitey	Collapsed from heat stroke alongside Misty (August 15-16 per incident record; August 7 per death record; dates may reflect different events); survived	—	—
1988	Misty	Died of heat stroke; dates vary between sources (August 7 in death record; August 15-16 in incident record with Whitey)	—	1
1990	Unnamed	Unattended horse spooked at Grand Army Plaza; four yellow cabs wrecked and a cab driver hospitalized; month-precision date	Serious	—
1990	Tony	Struck repeatedly by bus; died	—	1
1991	Unnamed	Second 1991 tying-up death; blog says same owner as Nickels (#9);	—	1
1991	Nickels	Tying-up syndrome; euthanized; carcass dumped on Long Island	—	1
1994	Unnamed	Severe cramps; euthanized in Central Park	—	1
1994	Unnamed	Tying-up syndrome collapse; died	—	1
1996	Unnamed	Collapsed in front of hotel; died	—	1
1997	Unnamed	Tripped while pulling carriage; died on 49th St	—	1
1997	Unnamed	Two carriages overturned; elderly woman and 8 others seriously injured	Serious	—
1997	Unnamed	Horse bounded onto sidewalk near Columbus Circle; tourist run over and dragged	Serious	—
1998	Unnamed	Runaway horse; two tourists jumped from carriage before it flipped at 42nd & 7th Ave	Minor	—
1998	Unnamed	Broke halter; hit by van; died	—	1
1999	Jackie	Stepped on Con Edison electrical box; electrocuted; died	—	1
1999	Unnamed	Horse startled and threw its driver at Central Park West & 57th; a second driver tried and failed to stop the runaway	Serious	—
1999	Unnamed	Hit-and-run collision; driver's jawbone shattered; horse also hit by oncoming car	Serious	—
1999	Unnamed	Runaway struck car; jumped sidewalk; 70-year-old woman pinned under horse's hoof	Serious	—
2000	Unnamed	Horse bucked; tipped carriage; bolted toward hot dog vendor; family of 4 tourists injured	Minor	—
2001	Unnamed	Taxi collided with the carriage in southern Central Park; horse startled; driver injured (severity unspecified)	Minor	—

2003	Unnamed	Horse startled; reared up; tipped carriage; two female tourists and driver injured	Minor	—
2006	Spotty	Spooked; pinned under car; three hospitalized (one critically); horse euthanized; horse also listed in deaths table	Critical	1
2006	Unnamed	Spooked horse crashed into 71-year-old bicyclist; broken hip	Serious	—
2006	Unnamed	Spooked horse from Shamrock Stable ran through the street and overturned a moving car at W 46th & 11th Ave; occupant injuries not stated	—	—
2006	Juliet (or Rusty)	Tying-up disease after 17 years of work; died	—	1
2007	Unnamed (young)	Spooked; galloped attached to carriage; hit by SUV; deemed fit for work two days later	—	—
2007	Bud	Collided with taxi; taxi driver and motorcyclist injured; horse gashed	Minor	—
2007	Smoothie	Spooked by drum; ran into tree; died	—	1
2008	Clancy	Found dead at stable; cause unknown	—	1
2009	Unnamed	Foot caught in parking meter; euthanized	—	1
2009	Unnamed	Alleged hit-and-run; motorist reported a carriage horse (brown horse; blue carriage) struck his vehicle at 6th Ave & Central Park South then left while witnesses gathered; from NYPD crash records obtained by NYCLASS/ Animal Legal Defense Fund lawsuit; reported by DNAinfo 2014-10-29	—	—
2009	Unnamed	Child passenger fell from a moving carriage and was rolled over by a wheel; suffered stomach chest and head injuries	Serious	—
2010	Unnamed	Carriage struck by a taxi at 60th St & Columbus Ave; driver ejected and found laying in the street not moving; loose horse bolted down 59th St hitting two parked yellow cabs and possibly fracturing its legs (outcome not recorded); from NYPD crash records via NYCLASS/ Animal Legal Defense Fund lawsuit; reported by DNAinfo 2014-10-29	Serious	—
2011	Unnamed	Carriage struck a delivery cyclist causing him to fall and break his bike at W 54th & 11th Ave	Minor	—
2011	Unnamed	A taxi rear-ended the carriage on Central Park South; a woman passenger was thrown and the horse was knocked to the street	Serious	—
2011	Charlie	Collapsed and died; necropsy confirmed gastric ulcer	—	1
2011	Unnamed	Unattended horse bolted into traffic; crashed into wall at 7th Ave; no human injuries reported	—	—
2011	Unnamed	Collapsed on 60th St; remained down for 15+ minutes	—	—
2011	Flash	Collapsed near hack line during busy holiday season; 4 passengers in carriage	—	—
2012	Unnamed	Fell in Central Park; injured leg; pulled from service	—	—
2012	Oreo	Carriage split in two; struck two cars; ran several blocks; tranquilized; horse retired — no serious human injuries	—	—

2012	Henry	Stumbled; injured leg; pulled from service	—	—
2012	Unnamed	Horse with 6 passengers bolted two blocks; passengers and driver jumped off; no serious injuries	—	—
2013	Unnamed (carriage #1075)	Collapsed near 5th Ave & 59th St; carriage #1075	—	—
2013	Chris	Pinned under overturned carriage; horse scratched; driver had prior violations on record	—	—
2013	Unnamed	Driver arrested for animal cruelty; forced visibly injured horse to work 5 hours; horse injured	—	—
2014	Spartacus	Spooked by bus; fell; pinned by overturned carriage; horse limping	—	—
2014	Pumpkin	Spooked at hack line; hit open taxi door	—	—
2015	Tickles	Found with fractured leg; euthanized	—	1
2015	Fury	Escaped Chateau Stables; galloped down W. 48th St without driver	—	—
2015	Unnamed	Carriage collided with 15-year-old cyclist; minor injuries to cyclist	Minor	—
2015	Stella	Carriage collided with taxi at 62nd & Broadway	—	—
2016	Spartacus	Spooked during industry rally near Midtown stable; bystanders fled	—	—
2016	Norman	14-year-old horse Norman collapsed at 9th Ave & W 45th St; blog does not state death	—	—
2016	Unnamed	Pedicab overturned after accident with horse-drawn carriage	—	—
2017	Billy	Horse Billy (distinct from the 2019/2022 Billys) spooked by a horn during rush hour; backed up and crashed into a cab at 8th Ave & W 56th St	—	—
2017	Goldie	12-year-old horse Goldie broke free and galloped ~11 blocks through rush-hour traffic on W 54th & 12th Ave	—	—
2018	Unnamed	A carriage overturned near Central Park as two carriages raced to the hack line	—	—
2018	Unnamed	Horse spooked by a pedestrian with an umbrella; bolted on Central Park South and crashed into two parked cars; three passengers hospitalized	Serious	—
2018	Unnamed	Horse fell while pulling a carriage near Central Park	—	—
2018	Unnamed	Operator negligence: driver filmed asleep and not holding the reins for ~45 minutes through Central Park and traffic; no crash/injury	—	—
2019	Spartacus	Died of colic in stable; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2019	Broadway	Colic; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2019	Billy	Cardiac failure; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2019	Unnamed (two horses)	Two same-day events: one horse collapsed near Central Park and separately a horse escaped its stable and bolted into traffic	—	—

2020	Bobby	Colic; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2020	Teddy	Colic; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2020	Molly	Cause of death unspecified in records; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2020	Aysha	PSSM (polysaccharide storage myopathy / muscle disease); euthanized; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2020	Alexa	Hindlimb paralysis; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2020	Joseph	Fracture; euthanized; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2021	Whiskey	Colic; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2021	Unnamed (three horses)	A man punched and kicked three carriage horses waiting for passengers in Central Park	—	—
2022	Juliette	Colic; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2022	Luciana	Horse Luciana collapsed in Central Park and remained down for about an hour	—	—
2022	Freddy	Horse Freddy spooked in Central Park; bolted onto 5th Ave & 60th St and crashed into parked cars; occupant/injury details not stated	—	—
2022	George	Throat cancer; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2022	Billy	Found dead in stall during heatwave; colic associated with heat; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2022	Ryder	Collapsed on street; emaciated condition noted; died months later of cancer (this incident inspired Ryder's Law).	—	1
2022	Paddy	Spooked after SUV collision; bolted from 58th St to Columbus Circle	—	—
2023	Blackjack	Colon volvulus; NYC DOHMH records	—	1
2023	Gunner	Carriage canopy malfunctioned; bolted; galloped onto West Side Highway; fell; driver dragged with minor injuries; horse received stitches and placed on stall rest	Minor	—
2024	Unnamed	Horse spooked and bolted at 6th Ave & W 59th St narrowly avoiding a collision; driver was absent; first recorded 2024 incident	—	—
2025	Unnamed	Two carriages collided at hack line; carriage overturned; driver briefly trapped and hospitalized by ambulance	Serious	—
2025	Shadow + unnamed	Two horses bolted; one driver broke wrist requiring surgery; other driver also injured	Serious	—
2025	Lady	Cornell necropsy: aortic rupture likely caused by hypertension from adrenal tumor; collapsed while returning to stable	—	1
2025	Bambi	Spooked by garbage truck during training; bolted; driver thrown to ground and chased on foot; horse struck signs and garbage cans; three passengers had safely exited; Bambi uninjured.	—	—

2026	Destiny	Bolted ~11:23 a.m.; struck 4-5 parked/moving vehicles including taxi (bumper torn off) and Parks Dept. vehicle; horse allegedly spooked by Amazon cargo e-bike; no injuries to people or horse	—	—
2026	Troy + Otis	Troy's carriage wheel caught a parked carriage triggering collision with Otis's carriage; Otis's carriage tipped; 44-year-old driver taken to NY Presbyterian-Weill Cornell with minor injuries; both horses unharmed	Minor	—
2026	Deniz	Collapsed ~7:30 pm and died on scene; Cornell necropsy found needles of Japanese yew (a highly toxic plant) in stomach mouth and intestines causing cardiac arrest; two tourists in carriage; neither passenger injured	—	1
2026	Unnamed	Family of four riding when horse spooked and bolted ~2:45 pm; driver had stepped out to photograph passengers; carriage clipped another carriage's wheel and overturned; 18-year-old tourist Romanch Mahajan was killed; first carriage-related human death in the record and first passenger death in the park	Fatal	—