

**Carriage Horse**  
**Stable Assessment Reports,**  
**Summary, and Recommendations.**

**Brookdale Farms**  
**Assessment**  
**7/13/14**

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On 7/13/14 ACO Ron Fischer and I performed an informal assessment of the Brookdale Farms stable located on Lombard Street near downtown St. Louis. The stable is retrofitted into an older-style warehouse building and is unmarked. Two single garage doors (one on the north-side, one on the south-side) are the main points of ingress/egress. An industrial drum fan was positioned near the south door, but appeared to be malfunctioning (employee worked on fan until it eventually ran). The odor of ammonia was immediately noted and while not overwhelming, was heavier than I would expect from a well-maintained stable. Square cinderblock stalls lined the east and west borders of the building. When we arrived, horses were being fed mixed grass hay and grain from the ground in their stall. Wood shavings at a depth of 3-4 inches were present in the stalls (no rubber mats). The shavings in most stalls were damp enough to hold shape when balled in a fist. The employee that assisted us (Travis) remarked that all of the stalls were in need of stripping (complete removal of old bedding and replacement with new). Water was provided to each stall out of 55 gallon blue barrels (halved) and appeared potable and generally free of excess debris. The stable did not have individual box fans for each stall the lack of which was apparent. The air within the stable was generally warm and stagnant due to the lack of external windows, eaves, or doors other than the previously mentioned. A stockpile of hay and shavings were present in the southwest corner of the barn. There are no outdoor paddocks at the Lombard Street stable. Waste is hauled to a private dumpster a short distance from the warehouse.

The horses were visually examined in their stalls. All appeared to be in good flesh with a body condition score 5-6 out of 9. All horses that are working are shod and a farrier trims and replaces shoes every 8 weeks. One Percheron, Ben, had collar galls (sores) present on both sides of the withers. Crusts were found to be covering ulcerated skin approximately 2 inches in diameter on either

side. Numerous flies were gathered in these areas. Travis indicated that Ben worked the previous day (Saturday July, 11) and that he was scheduled to work the day of the assessment as well. I inquired how they are able to treat the sores with the animal working; Travis explained that they add additional padding to the collar or switch the animal into a breast-pull harness. All horses are bathed daily at minimum and tack is wiped down/cleaned daily.

A dark bay Percheron identified as Moose was haltered and removed from his stall. His resting vital signs were Heart Rate: 40; Temperature: 100.5; and Respiratory Rate: 76. At rest Moose was rhythmically breathing with nostril flare and subtle abdominal component. Bronchovesicular lung sounds were detected in all lung fields (no harsh wheezing was detected). Travis remarked that this type of breathing was typical for Moose. He also said that Moose was not currently under treatment for any condition diagnosed by a veterinarian.

I examined the employee schedule kept on a dry-erase board. Travis explained that the horses are typically worked 5 days per week for 8 weeks, then trailered back to Brookdale Farm in Eureka, MO for a vacation of variable length. Travis described hours as follows: During weekdays the shifts are approximately 4 pm until 10 pm. During weekends shifts can begin as early as 11 am and continue for an additional 8-10 hours depending on how busy they are. The employees of Brookdale Farms that we spoke to were not aware of any rules governing duration of shift or starting time based on temperature. They were also unaware of any rules prohibiting operation during traffic rush hour (4-6 pm on weekdays). Brookdale Farms does have a winter "off-season" at the downtown stables (where all horses are transported to the Eureka farm) but the starting and ending dates of this season vary. The employees we spoke to could tell us the names of the farrier and veterinarian that Brookdale uses, but no contact information. No medical records for any of the horses were available on-site for review.

**St. Louis Carriage Company**  
**Assessment**  
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On 7/13/14 ACO Ron Fischer and I performed an informal assessment of the St. Louis Carriage Company stable located on Cerre Street near downtown St. Louis. The stable is a standard gable barn with double breezeways and center aisle stalls. Industrial drum fans at the open entry of the breezeways were in use when we arrived and airflow resulted in no discernible ammonia odor. Rectangular wood stalls were present in three aisles with the two outer aisles having exterior windows that were all open. Chest level feeding bins contained mixed grass hay and grain. Water was provided out of 5 gallon buckets and appeared potable and generally free of excess debris. Wood shavings were the substrate on stall floors at a depth of approximately six inches. Shavings were dry and did not hold their shape when balled in a fist. No rubber mats were detected. Stalls were outfitted with their own individual box fans. Grain was kept in a silo within the center aisle and hay was stored overhead. There was a dirt paddock located a short distance from the barn. There was access to water however shade was minimal. A lean-to or similar shelter was not present in the paddock. Waste was deposited in a private dumpster about 20 feet from the barn. No animal was removed from its stall during the assessment. Horses were visually inspected and found to be in good flesh with BCS 5-6/9. Two barn cats were said to live at the stable, food and water bowls were observed but the cats remained unseen.

The employee schedule was kept on a dry erase board. An employee, Madison, explained that the horses work 5 days per week. Shifts begin as early as 12:45 pm and generally last 8 hours. She explained that there is no firm “rule” about temperature and shift starting time, rather it is up to manager’s discretion to delay shift departures due to heat. She also remarked that each horse is different but typically they will work two weeks on, one week off. I asked for farrier/veterinarian

contact information and this employee was unable to provide it. I was unable to clarify if medical records were kept on-site or at an off-site location, therefore I was unable to review them.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

**7/14/14**

The video recording of Moose from the evening of 7/12/14 reveal an animal clearly in respiratory distress. Because a veterinarian was unable to examine Moose at the time the video was recorded, we will likely never know exactly what factors or medical conditions contributed to his state that evening. These factors however are almost certainly multiple in nature (e.g. ambient temperature, humidity, duration of shift, known or unknown medical conditions).

Horses working in urban environments require special considerations for their health and welfare. There is no doubt that these animals are at greater risk of illness and injury for a variety of reasons (e.g. air pollution, motorized traffic, concussive surfaces, extreme weather conditions, and the unpredictable nature of horses themselves). Based upon my assessment, investigation, and professional judgement, I recommend the following actions be taken at a minimum:

- Ensure that carriage horse stables operating within the city are held to the current standards and best practices of equine husbandry including but not limited to:
  - Adequate fresh air and ventilation (i.e. individual and industrial fans in good repair combined with windows, doors, grates, vents and eaves).
  - Fastidious cleaning practices to minimize horse exposure to dust, debris and odor.
  - Ideally, storage of food and bedding materials in an area separate from the horse barn.
- Work with carriage horse stables to improve record keeping and access to records such as: medical records (including most recent Coggins test); farrier records; work schedules; and number of weeks on/off duty.
- Develop a system of welfare checks enacted by Health Department Animal Control Officers and City Veterinarian. This would include inspection of stables as well as horses working in the field at various times of day/night.

- Develop a consistent hot weather policy for working carriage horses and ensure that it is adhered to.
- Requiring that the individual horse, Moose, undergo a complete respiratory diagnostic work-up and is found to be healthy and unremarkable prior to his return to the city for use as a carriage horse. Primarily, he should have Bronchoalveolar Lavage performed to rule-in or rule-out Inflammatory Airway Disease (IAD) and quantify the severity of the condition if present, as a variety of management techniques and therapies may be indicated at that time. This work-up should be performed in collaboration with the City Veterinarian.

Included in this document find only the earnest observations, opinions, and recommendations of the veterinarian serving the City of St. Louis.

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