

BaEmek u'baRama, December 13, 2012

The rag and bone horses are being taken off the roads

The phenomenon of the rag and bone horse is still part of daily life in towns across Israel. Horses or donkeys are used to pull heavy loads along urban streets, as a cheap substitute for motor vehicles. Transport Minister Israel Katz has recently decided to adopt the recommendation of the Hakol Chai Association and stop the use of horses harnessed to carts

Sigal Bukstein

Hakol Chai, an association founded in 2001, has been waging a battle against this archaic phenomenon for many years, and regularly receives calls from citizens coming across it on a daily basis, who are troubled by the painful sight of the suffering horses, forced to drag overloaded carts through the town center. Calls of this kind are received from the residents of towns throughout the country. Cumulative experience shows that this is a general problem, common to most local authorities in Israel.

Around the world, a broad coalition of animal welfare organizations has been fighting this phenomenon for many years, which also exists in other countries in the form of horse-drawn carriages for tourists. The energetic battle waged by the coalition has borne fruit in various major cities, and as of today the phenomenon has been outlawed in Paris, France, in London, Eastbourne and Oxford in England, in certain towns in Florida and in Mississippi in the USA, and elsewhere.

In honor of International Carthorse Day, marked throughout the world on December 1, the international animal rights organizations of PETA and HWCI (Horses Without Carriages International) have chosen to express their appreciation and thanks to the Minister of Transport, Israel Katz, through Hakol Chai, for joining the fight against rag and bone horses on the streets of Israel.

In their letters, these organizations expressed their great appreciation for Minister Katz's decision to remove the horse-drawn carts from Israel's roads. They also mention the considerable suffering caused to the cart horses as a result of pulling heavy loads while walking along the asphalt roads in the middle of heavy traffic, and as a result of the particularly poor living conditions in which they are kept, as well as the lack of appropriate medical treatment. All these endanger their health and frequently cause death as a result of neglect.

The president of PETA, Ms Ingrid Newkirk, emphasized in her letter that her considerable experience has shown that it is not possible to improve the conditions in which these horses are

kept through regulation, and therefore the only solution for dealing with it is to completely eradicate it.

The president of the HWCI coalition, Ms Elizabeth Forel, pointed out that the organization that she heads has brought the phenomenon to worldwide public and media attention, and today coalition members operate forcefully in many countries and towns around the world, including in the United States, Canada, Italy, and so on.

Hakol Chai said that it was heartwarming to know that for the first time, after a prolonged struggle, this year Israel can mark International Carthorse Day as the start of a process that will, in the end, lead to the disappearance of the phenomenon of the rag and bone horse in the country. The letters from PETA and HWCI, leading animal rights organizations worldwide, testify to the great importance of this step, which will produce enormous benefit in the lives of many horses around Israel.