Dr. Sheryl King has provided her critique of the misinformation in Dr. Cheever’s 2014 article. Dr. King’s qualifications as an expert in matters of equine physiology include:

BS Animal Science Univ Mass Amherst.

PhD Animal Physiology with dissertation research in horses. Univ Calif Davis.

Founder and director Equine Science program Southern Illinois Univ Carbondale for 29 years.

Taught equine science and authored about 30 peer reviewed scientific publications on horses and bovine science and management.

Recipient of $500,000 in research grants.

Fellow in the national Equine Science Society.

SIUC College of Ag Outstanding Scholar.

Dr. King’s rebuttal to Dr. Cheever’s arguments:

Horse drawn carriages and motor vehicles should not share the roadways due to safety issues.

* Chicago carriage companies have been operating for 37 years without a serious accident much less a fatality to either horse or human.

Exhaust fumes

* None of the carriage horses in Chicago suffer from any respiratory conditions attributable to exhaust emissions or other environmental irritants.

Daily ‘turn-out’ for carriage horses at stable site

* One carriage operation has nothing but pasture turnout. Two others have stalls of adequate size for the horses housed. These horses are exercised on a regular basis in the daily course of their jobs. They have pasture turnout when they are rested each year.
* One cannot claim that these horses are ‘overworked’ and then claim that they need pasture turnout in order to be free to stretch their legs.

Source of horses is not relevant to those used in the Chicago carriage trade. These horses are inspected a minimum of four times per year by a veterinarian for health and potential lameness issues. Only animals approved by a DVM to be fit for work are utilized.

Handling section appears to pertain to New York. This is not the case for Chicago.

Also, the veterinarian authoring this piece is not an equine practitioner, so her view on the expertise of others in dealing with equine is perhaps suspect.

Respiratory Disease cites ‘results’ from an unpublished study! If it is not published, there is a reason. Generally, scientific inquiries that do not make it to publication do so because their methodology is flawed or their results are not supported by the data presented.

Secondly (and I suspect this may be a reason for lack of publication), even if lung tissue damage was detected (how was this detected?), one cannot unequivocally prove that this damage is due to ‘exposure to noxious vehicular emission fumes’. The prior section on “Sourcing” these horses claimed that they were bought from ‘killer buyers’, and had seen many prior years of service in other segments of the horse industry. If this is so, lung damage could have well occurred at that time, or from a past communicable disease. I could quote you a LOT of published studies examining the possible causes of exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhage in race horses that claim that bleeding may be due in part to lung damage from a bout of the flu as a young horse. It follows, therefore that cause and effect cannot possibly be linked in this unpublished study.

Lameness:

Chicago carriage horses are mandated to receive regular farrier care. They are required to be shod with appropriate shoes for both concussion absorption and traction.

This section in particular is just egregiously wrong.

Heat Prostration:

Chicago carriage horses cannot work when the ambient temperature is above 90 degrees. They have water available at every carriage stop and they are required to have a 15 minute rest every hour – plenty of time to hydrate.

“Often collapsed in the streets or in their stables” ? This is incendiary and untrue either in Chicago or New York.

The physiology stated for extreme temperature and humidity is correct, but it is taken completely out of context when considering that horses working the streets a) cannot work in temps over 90 and b) receive adequate hydration.

Spooking

These horses are completely conditioned to their work.

Just as you see ‘normally’ flighty horses serving in police forces during riots, or in competitions such as cowboy mounted shooting, or as cavalry mounts, horses can be conditioned to a loud and bustling environment and will not spook.

No recorded accidents from loose ‘spooked’ horses colliding with a motor vehicle or a pedestrian. No fatalities at all.

Stabling

See David Nobbe’s notes on the stabling of the Chicago horses. It was extremely clean, stalls of appropriate size for the horse and the horses well cared for.

The references cited for this publication are quite inadequate. Personal communications, unpublished “research”, a book chapter on exercise physiology (the only science cited), and an article on “Environmental Stress in Street Trees”???????? What does this have to do with a horse?

In my opinion as an Equine Physiologist, I can say that what is written in this ‘article’ is mostly theory spouted straight from a text book. It shows no indication to me that the author has an intimate understanding of the equine.