

## It's August... and 'poor horses' are still waiting

Claudia Calleja



Horses are forced to wait for business in the heat without any shelter. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier

It is a pity that infrastructure issues related to building shelters for karozzini horses are overshadowing the welfare of the animals, according to a group of animal rights' organisations.

The Animal Rights Coalition is insisting Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt should live up to a promise made last year and build the shelters to protect the horses from the sweltering summer sun while they waited for business.

However, Transport Malta said owners of the horse-drawn cabs should build and maintain the shelters without expecting the government to do so.

Transport Malta added that while it was willing to "facilitate the funding", the cabbies should not expect public funds to be used to compensate for their legal obligations to make sure the animals did not suffer unnecessarily.

Last year the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), an international animal welfare association, called on the authorities to set up adequate shelters for the karozzini horses.

A government spokesman had said the transport and tourism authorities were discussing the possibility of setting them up.

In a report issued earlier this year, WSPA and the World Society for Traction Animal Welfare and Studies (Taws) pointed out that horses did not have adequate shade, shelter, water troughs and hygiene facilities at stands where they waited for custom or rested.

While animal welfare experts agree on the need to provide horses with shelter, the issue has now fizzled into an infrastructure debate – on who should build the shelters – rather than focusing on animal welfare.

Myriam Kirmond, from the coalition, said she hoped some form of temporary shelter would be set up until a solution was found for permanent structures.

“It’s already August and the poor horses are forced to wait for business in the blistering heat,” she said.

She thanked Environment Minister George Pullicino for his work on the well equipped animal aftercare centre in Ta’ Qali. It will include an area for horses following consultation with animal groups.

“This ministry is clearly one of the few that communicates with the people, in this case those who have been working for more humane animal conditions for years,” she said.

The first move to protect the animals from the summer sun came in 2005 when the government set up provisional shelters in St George’s Square, Valletta. The shelters were dismantled last August when horse-drawn cab drivers were stopped from entering the centre of Valletta so the area could be turned into a pedestrian zone.

Cab stands were temporarily relocated in various areas on the outskirts of the capital where there are no shelters yet.

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## Comments

M. Cachia(1 week, 5 days ago) 


- My point... There should be some kind of regular health check on these poor animals. If an athlete is injured, he is made to rest not work day & night into the ground!

M. Cachia(1 week, 5 days ago) 

An issue that is causing so much up-roar yet nothing is ever done! Besides lack of shelter & fresh water, being a horse lover & having worked around horses all my life, I am able to spot issues which many might not. For example the horse pictured in photo is said to be 'Splay-footed', a defect in his front legs causing his hooves to develop pointing outwards. In time, this puts pressure on the inside of the knee which can cause stress or strain to ligaments, tendons & joints. Another case witnessed was a couple of months back where a horse was being made to trot along the road pulling his heavy 'karozzin'. This horse was very clearly lame on a front leg, meaning that he was in some kind of pain causing him to limp quite badly. This was very clear as he was hardly placing any weight on this bad leg, causing him to hop along the road unable to slow down or stop, whilst his so called owner sat behind him rhythmically whipping the horse forward.

Charmaine Marmara'(1 week, 5 days ago) 

ara sid iz zwiemel jixorbu l birra jew it te go xi bar u jaqbd ma kull mara li jaraw ghaddeja qisom qatta mxenqin

M. Calleja(1 week, 5 days ago) 

... and so are the people waiting for the Park and Ride bus on the sidewalk just opposite to the Santa Caterina d'Italia Chapel. Unless you happen to be waiting for the PaR mini-bus at 13.30 hrs when government employees issue from their offices, you have to wait for a good 15 minutes for the mini-bus to come over and collect any patrons using the service with the summer sun belting belting down on your heqad- no wonder that xi bully [jew bullija] attempts to skip the queue...

... apart from the fact that the pavement where patrons are waiting (ie: the one opposite Santa Caterina d'Italia Chapel) is one of the most slippery in Valletta and with persons constantly injuring themselves after a fall on the paving stones.

May I suggest that PaR find a most suitable location for alighting and loading patrons ... perhaps just outside the entrance to St James Cavalier adjacent to the Casa Annona Post office opposite Auberege de Castille... or perhaps on the other side just outside the car park opposite CBM ... and that light structures be erected during the summer months to give a little respite to patrons from the sun ...

Claire Busuttil(1 week, 6 days ago) 

TAL MISTHIJA.....kemm jifilhu jadduna biz zmien il politici li ghandna f dal povru pajjiz!!!!!!!  
Veru mohqrija sfaccata din taz zwimel.....

Franco Farrugia(1 week, 6 days ago) 

There are so many blots regarding animal welfare in the country that there is no further space for more blots! Utterly disgusting. The government's will with regard to welfare of animals is nil; zilch, or really, on the minus!  
An incompetent minister where animals are involved. No man's land, it seems. Malta needs a minister who loves animals!

C.Sammut(1 week, 6 days ago) 

The Animal Welfare Department should come up with guidelines on using animals for work purposes. This is to include the time which the animal can spend exposed to the elements, the treatments that can be done to protect further, the feed and water to such animals and the condition of the animal prior to it being 'employed' with annual veterinary tests to ensure no suffering. Obviously this will affect livelihood of the cab owner so this must be considered and planned too.

Sylvia Zammit(1 week, 6 days ago) 

It is much more than a pity - it is a shame - a big blot on the reputation of Malta. It does not seem to do any good to keep appealing to the people in authority on behalf of the suffering horses. The attitude seems to be 'who cares? ' - and it's also evident in some of the comments such letters/articles generate. OK - so few care about the horses - but surely they care about the bad publicity this is creating? After all, if the tourists should suddenly wake up and decide to boycott the karozzini, something would be done. What on earth are you waiting for? The next election?