

Fifteen horses die in tragic accident

A double-deck trailer hauling Belgian horses crashes in Illinois.

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Many people in the equine community are outraged after a double-deck trailer carrying 59 Belgian draft horse yearlings collided with a pickup truck in Illinois Oct. 27, leaving 15 horses dead and many others injured. Firefighters and rescue workers spent more than five hours trying to free trapped horses from the wreckage.

The driver of the double-deck trailer, James Anderson of McLeod, N.D., has been charged with disobeying a traffic control device and failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident. According to Christine Berry of the Equine Protection Network, an equine welfare organization opposed to double-deck horse transport, Illinois State Police safety inspectors were checking the tractor-trailer McLeod was driving for equipment violations and the United States Department of Agriculture is investigating possible violations of the Commercial Transportation of Horses to Slaughter Act regulations.

Nine horses died at the accident scene and another six died later or had to be euthanized. According to reports, the horses were being shipped from Millersberg, Ind., and were headed to Verndale, Minn. The driver of the pickup, Larry Hanlin, 67, of Libertyville, Ill., was treated and released from an area hospital.

Equine welfare groups have long called for legislation to ban the transport of horses in double-deck trailers. The federal Commercial Transportation of Horses to Slaughter Act bans double-deck trailers to transport horses, but it applies only to horses transported directly to slaughter; it does not apply to rodeo stock contractors or horse dealers, according to Christine Berry of the Equine Protection Network. "It is nothing more than a 'paper tiger' that legalized every inhumane practice identified in the Transport of Horses to Slaughter Act and puts the very people identified as the abusers, and in some cases convicted of cruelty to horses, in charge of the horse's welfare," she says.

"This accident is justification for introduction and swift passage of the Illinois Horse Transport Law that will prohibit the use of inhumane double-deck trailers to transport any horse, no matter what its final destination," Berry continues.

Only a few states have laws on the books that completely ban equine double-deck transport. Berry hopes this tragic event will motivate some state lawmakers, including those in Illinois, to take action. "I know the people of Illinois want this inhumane transport outlawed," she says.

For more information about what the Equine Protection Network is doing to ban all double-deck horse transport, click here >>