

# HORSES AND DOUBLE DECKER TRAILERS

Double decker livestock trailers are the traditional means for transporting livestock such as pigs and cattle to and from auctions, and to slaughter. This paper discusses the reasons why double deck trailers are not safe for transporting horses.



Double deckers have two floors in the belly, or mid-section, so that more animals can be loaded, making it a more economical way to ship. Horses and other animals are sometimes shipped over very long distances and can be transported legally for up to 36 hours.

## Inadequate Headroom

Videos and pictures of horses loaded on double deckers all illustrate the same conditions. Horses are cramped and must hold their heads in an unnaturally low position. One such picture shows a horse on the top deck with her head pinned between another horses' rump, and the roof.

Within Canada's Health of Animals Act <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C.R.C.-c.296> , a Section is written to ensure that adequate headroom in transport is provided.

***Section 142, Health of Animals Regulations: No person shall transport or cause to be transported animals in a railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel unless (a) each animal is able to stand in its natural position without coming into contact with a deck or roof...***

The agency responsible for the enforcement of the Health of Animals Act, is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

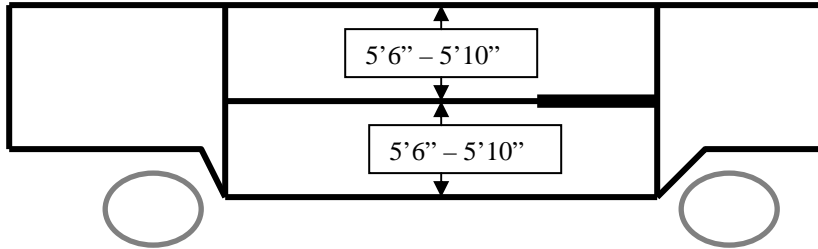
Double deckers continue to be used to transport horses on Canadian roadways on a daily basis, from auction markets, feedlots and over long distances from the U.S. to Canadian slaughter destinations.

According to the CFIA from their webpage titled "Notice to Industry - Transporting Horses in Canada: is that Animal Fit for the Trip?" <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/trans/20080430e.shtml> the following is stated:

***Vehicles must also provide adequate space and headroom to allow the horses to stand in a natural position. Transporting horses on double deck trailers does not provide sufficient headroom for most horses. Because of their size, horses over fourteen hands can suffer head or back injuries in these vehicles.***

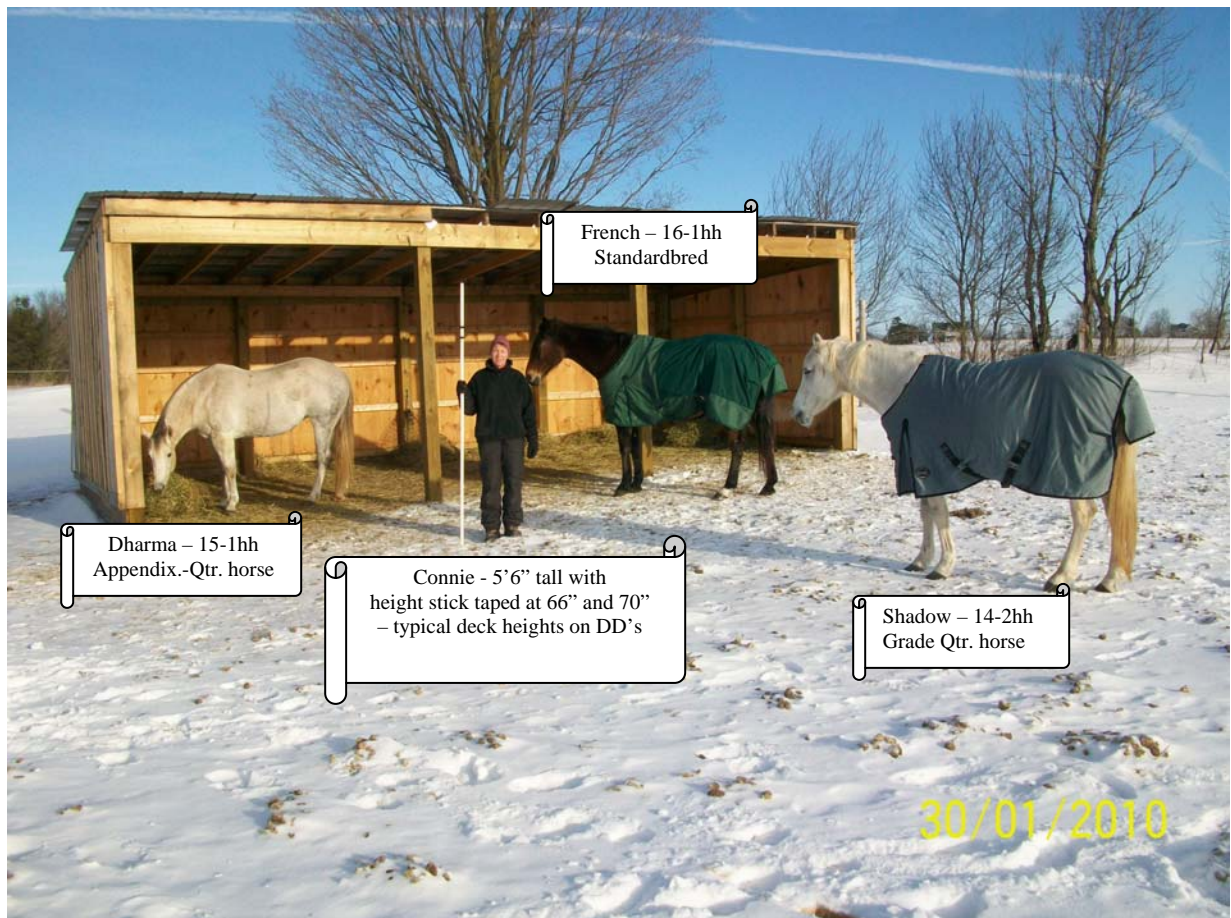
Horses are measured in hands, with each hand equaling 4". The hands height is measured at the withers, or the base of the neck, where the neck meets the spine. It is quite clear in this statement that horses over 14 hands, or 56 inches (4'6") have inadequate headroom on these trailers.

Further research determined that deck heights in the bi-level sections between the wheels vary from 5'6" to 5'10":



The lower deck also has a ramp stored, affixed to the lower deck ceiling, further reducing head-space by several inches for that area.

For illustration purposes, a long white stick was obtained, and secured with black electric tape at 5'6" and 5'10", to reflect each deck height. In these pictures, horse protection advocate Connie Rodgers holds the stick next to each of her three horses, to see how they measure up against these heights.



## Results



**French** at 16-1hh at the withers would have only approx. 2" clearance from withers to deck ceiling. Quite clearly, horses his height are too tall for double deckers and are at great risk of injury. Most Standardbreds and Thoroughbreds are in the 15-2 to 16 hand range.



**Dharma** at 15-1hh reflects what an average height horse would experience on a double decker. She is standing in a natural position, yet still has insufficient headroom.



**Shadow** at 14-2hh is officially 'pony size'. While she fares better than her taller companions, loading her on the bi-level decks would STILL violate Regulation 142(a) for headroom.

These three horses, on their home farm being handled by their owner, have a natural stance that is more relaxed than would be in a double decker loading situation. The anxiety and fear they experience being loaded onto an unfamiliar trailer with many other horses creates a high-headed stance that would be natural under those conditions. Given that the smallest, pony-sized horse in her natural stance exceeds the black tape on the stick, these pictures clearly illustrate that double deckers have inadequate headroom, and that horses cannot legally be transported on them.

## Further Proof



June 2009 - 2 pictures of horses on the lower deck of a double decker. At left: the ears of horse on the left are bent against the roof. At right: horse with head squeezed against the roof.





May 2009 - Horse on top deck of a double decker. She is in the back corner, pinned between the wall and another horse.



May 2009 - Picture taken at night into a double decker being loaded with horses. The horse on the left has very little clearance above the withers. Also notice the metal struts that further reduce headroom.



April 2008 - Horse with face lacerations at a Saskatchewan horse slaughter plant. It is common to see head injuries on horses that travel on double deckers.



Horse with a severe head injury, at a Texas horse slaughter plant in 2005, possibly received on a double decker.

Ongoing exchanges with the CFIA on this issue have prompted responses such as this:

***Having said that, there is a high risk that a horse may be transported on a double deck trailer without adequate headroom. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is considering the possibility of proposing an amendment to the Regulations which would prohibit the transportation of all horses on double deck trailers.***

These words have been spoken by the CFIA for many years. The changes to the regulations have been promised since at least the year 2000. Yet double deckers with horses on both levels continue to be transported, observed, videotaped and reported to the CFIA. CFIA Inspectors have viewed recent videotapes, and are regularly present to see the loading of horses at auctions. Violations of the Health of Animals Act, Section 142(a), persist to this day. Horses continue to receive serious head wounds, and some are fatally injured, arriving at their destination dead on arrival.

What can Canadians do to prevent any more horses from being illegally transported on double deckers, and thereby finally end this unnecessary suffering?

## **Responsible Horse Ownership**

With horse ownership comes responsibility. While horses may be purchased for a reasonable price, the monthly costs of feed, shelter, medical, veterinary and farrier fees make horse ownership expensive. People must be prepared for the financial responsibility. Horses also require regular handling and proper training. Time must be dedicated to your horses. When horses get sick and/or grow old, sometimes the hard decision must be made to consider euthanization. The cost of euthanizing your horse is about the same as a month's stable board. Doesn't your horse deserve a dignified, peaceful end to its life? Sending your horse to auction puts it at tremendous risk of entering the slaughter pipeline. Every rural auction has horse dealers and kill buyers present. If a horse dealer can't make a profit on your horse, the kill buyer will.

## **Lobby for Change Through the CFIA and Your Member of Parliament**

**Contact the CFIA** via their Web Comments and Feedback Form page:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/tools/feedback/commene.shtml>

or by phone at: 1-800-442-2342 / 1-613-225-2342 / 08:00 to 20:00 Eastern time, Monday to Friday.

**Contact the Minister responsible for the CFIA, Hon. Gerry Ritz** at:

[http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/min/index\\_e.php?s1=help-aide&s2=contact](http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/min/index_e.php?s1=help-aide&s2=contact)

or by phone in Ottawa at 613-995-7080, or at his constituency office in SK at 306-445-2004

**Contact Your MP** via this link:

<http://webinfo.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx?TimePeriod=Current&Language=E>

**Enforcement of Section 142(a), protecting horses while being transported, will only happen when people speak out and demand that this regulation be followed. In order for Section 142(a) to be adhered to, horses must no longer be allowed on double decker trailers. The CFIA must follow through on their promises to make whatever changes are necessary, so that horses no longer have to suffer on double decker trailers.**

For more information on the use of double deck trailers for horses, please visit the Equine Protection Network webpage on horse transport at: <http://www.equineprotectionnetwork.com/transport/transportindex.htm>

Please feel free to share with the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition (CHDC) any actions or information you have that would help, and share any progress that is made for the horses! The CHDC at [www.defendhorsescanada.org](http://www.defendhorsescanada.org) can be reached by email at [info@defendhorsescanada.org](mailto:info@defendhorsescanada.org).