



Horse Transportation Safety Act H.R. 4440 / S. 1459



AVMA SUPPORTS

Double-decker trailers do not provide horses with the adequate headroom they need to safely travel on U.S. highways, and AVMA believes their use to transport horses should be banned.

What will this bill do?

This legislation would amend title 49 of the United States Code to prohibit the transportation of horses in interstate commerce in a motor vehicle (except a vehicle operated exclusively on rail or rails) containing two or more levels stacked on top of one another. It also sets forth civil penalties for violation.

What is the problem?

Double-decker trailers are unable to provide the necessary headroom for horses, while still meeting the U.S. Department of Transportation's height restrictions to safely pass under bridges on the nation's highways. This puts horses at risk for injuries. The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) [has found](#) that "[T]here is a significant body of evidence indicating that many more equines are injured during transport in double-deck trailers than in single-deck trailers."

Also, there are currently conflicting federal standards when it comes to transporting horses. The use of double-decker trailers has been banned by APHIS for horses that are bound for slaughter facilities, but permitted for horses transported for other reasons. The AVMA believes there should be one federal standard for the transport of all horses during interstate travel.

Why is AVMA supportive?

The AVMA is supportive of this legislation because it is consistent with the policy on the [Humane Transport of Equines](#), which says, among other things, that the conveyances transporting horses must "be designed, constructed and maintained to protect the health and welfare of the equines being transported at all times."

Scientific data shows that a horse needs a minimum of seven to eight feet in height in order to fully raise its head while traveling. Current interstate highway regulations require a minimum vertical clearance under overhead structures of 16 feet in rural areas and 14 feet in urban areas. No trailer with two or more levels, and added clearance for the tires, can meet those minimum humane transport requirements while staying within the maximum height limits that are necessary to safely travel under bridges in urban or rural environments.

The AVMA has consistently supported related proposals to protect the welfare of horses in transit to slaughter.

- AVMA representatives were members of a group that worked with the USDA to draft regulations, adopted in 2001, which created the Slaughter Horse Transport Program.
- The AVMA is supportive of APHIS' recently published final rule on the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter, which bans the use of double-decker trailers on the entire transport chain of horses bound to slaughter. ([Docket No. APHIS-2006-0168](#))

Key points:

- The use of double-decker trailers for the transport of horses raises serious concerns for the safety of horses.
- Horses have a higher rate of injury when transported on double-decker trailers because they do not provide adequate headroom for horses traveling on both levels.
- Currently there are two federal standards when it comes to transporting horses, which needs to be fixed. Double-decker trailers are banned for horses bound for slaughter, but not for others.
- The USDA has said that it "does not believe that equines can be safely and humanely transported on a conveyance that has an animal cargo space divided into two or more stacked levels" (9 CFR Parts 70 and 88)

Status of the bill:

- H.R. 4440: Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) introduced the bill on April 9, 2014, and it has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.
- S. 1459: Rep. Mark Kirk (R-III.) introduced the bill on Aug. 1, 2013, and it has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.