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They shouldn't be your beasts of burden

By [Zafir Rinat](#)

Friedrich Nietzsche's biographers contend that he had a nervous breakdown at the end of his life after attempting to protect a horse from a beating by its owner. Today, too, horses need to be protected from abuse. Just two weeks ago, the media reported that a horse had collapsed on a Haifa street after two youths beat it and left it lying on the pavement. The horse was then taken to the Haifa Municipality's veterinary department, and it will hopefully never be handed over to the likes of merciless thugs again.

While the Cruelty to Animals Law is meant to protect animals from harm and abuse, the Hakol Chai (Concern for Helping Animals in Israel) organization says certain municipalities do not require a permit for owning animals. Kol Chai says that even if such a law exists in other localities, it is not often enforced. Thus supervision of animal treatment is sorely lacking.

Local authority veterinarians told Kol Hai they could not treat abused horses, because they did not have the appropriate facilities. In the streets of Tel Aviv and Jaffa, one still often sees horses tied to carts. They drag heavy loads on hot summer days and their suffering and exhaustion are clearly visible on their faces and in their body movements.

Awareness of the plight of livestock is growing, and Tel Aviv residents have recently begun applying pressure on the municipality to increase its efforts to prevent animal abuse. Besides the problem of cruelty to animals, they have raised the concern that ill horses and donkeys could spread diseases to humans. Some of the members of the city council also attempted to take action in this regard, and the Tel Aviv branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) has begun caring for horses and donkeys that have been abused and finding new owners for them.

About two weeks ago, the SPCA reported on a collaborative effort with Hakol Chai to "rescue another horse from its tormentors." The horse was found in south Tel Aviv's Salame Street with injuries to most of its body and swollen legs. It was sent to the SPCA after the police and municipal veterinarian department intervened. A medical examination revealed that the horse was limping on both hind legs, was suffering from dehydration and anemia and had numerous sores on its body, especially in those areas that had come into contact with the reins and the straps that tied it to the cart.

Municipal veterinarian Dr. Zvi Galin has promised that the number of abused horses will significantly decrease in the near future. In

addition, he says, the conditions under which a person is permitted to keep a horse will be set and the municipality will ensure they are enforced. According to Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipal law, any person who owns a horse or another beast of burden, must receive a permit from the municipality. Until about two years ago, the law was very loosely enforced, but Galin says that the policy has changed in the past year and a half.

"We have begun taking action with the aim of mapping and examining the number of horses and donkeys that we have here and just how serious the problem is," Galin says. "We estimate that there are some 50 or 60 horses and donkeys, and most of them are being used by people who collect alte zachen [used items]. However, we still lack some information and we would like to the public to help us with this." He says the municipal inspectors have begun informing all the horse owners that they must apply for a permit. "We have explained to them that it is not our intention to ban the use of horses entirely but rather to regulate it, and to ensure that the horses are cared for in the way they should be."

Inspectors and policemen have recently been instructed to write out fines for any owners of horses found without a permit, and to call a veterinarian any time an animal appears to be suffering from health problems. As a result of these examinations, several horses have been sent to the SPCA shelter. Galin says this has led to complaints on the part of the owners, who have begun taking action against the municipality.

The Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality plans to offer owners, used to using their horses for hard labor alone, the option of tourist carriage rides. Anyone interested in obtaining a permit to operate a carriage will have to meet a series of criteria, and his horse will have to undergo periodic veterinary inspections. "I want to show that there is a proper way to take care of horses and to raise them," he says.

