

Cruel Cargo:

Hidden Injuries & Deaths in Canada's Live Horse Export Trade



**Prepared by Animal Justice
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I. Introduction

Each year, thousands of large, gentle draft horses are exported from airports in Edmonton and Winnipeg to Japan, where the animals are fattened, slaughtered, and eaten as a raw delicacy in high-end restaurants. According to Canadian law, horses can be transported without food, water, and rest for a maximum of 28 hours—an extremely long duration which, due to horses’ unique physiology, puts them at high risk of suffering caused by fear, exhaustion, severe dehydration, and extreme hunger.¹ An investigation released by Animal Justice in June 2024, in conjunction with Japan-based Life Investigation Agency, showed that the vast majority of shipments were exceeding this already grueling legal limit.² Time-stamped footage of the process of unloading and transporting horses to quarantine in Japan showed that approximately 60% of shipments from Edmonton and 100% of shipments from Winnipeg went over the legal limit.

A second investigation—based on Government of Japan data, and released by Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency in September 2024—revealed a shocking pattern of injuries, deaths, and illnesses in horses exported for slaughter.³ The data showed that horses regularly become injured during transport, suffer severe transport-related illnesses after landing, and even die during transport and

¹ For instance, the European Food Safety Authority notes that gastro-enteric disorders, as well as physiological biomarkers of hunger have been reported in horses after 12 hours of transport without food, and recommends that horses be provided with feed and water at least every 4 hours during transport. See:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/plain-language-summary/welfare-equine-during-transport>

² Flying Above the Law (June 2024):

<https://animaljustice.ca/exposes/inside-canadian-horses-journey-to-japan>

³ Flight to Fatality (September 2024): <https://animaljustice.ca/blog/21-horses-killed-in-shipments>

in the hours and days following. None of the deaths and injuries were reflected in Canadian Food Inspection Agency (“CFIA”) records.

After the release of these investigations, the CFIA promised it would look into these patterns of non-compliance and “take immediate steps” to protect horses.⁴ The Agency reminded exporters of their legal obligations and changed paperwork requirements for these shipments. But has this increased oversight resulted in meaningful improvements for horses?

This report examines new Government of Japan data from 2024-2025 and shows that horses continue to suffer injuries, illnesses, and death during, and as a result of, transport. At least nine horses died as a result of transport during this time. At least 29 collapsed on flights. Exporters reported that none of these fallen horses suffered any injuries, though Japanese records showed two were euthanized shortly after landing due to leg injuries, one could not stand and had to be towed from the plane on “litters and grass mats”, and one was forced to stand despite significant bleeding. More than 290 other horses appear to have suffered serious injuries and illness.

The facts speak for themselves—even with the CFIA’s purported efforts to improve oversight, the horse export-for-slaughter industry causes unimaginable and inexcusable suffering to horses. The only way to protect horses from painful injuries, illnesses, and death is to finally end this cruel practice.

⁴ See, e.g. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/horses-japan-aircraft-1.7321374>

1) Background

While the number of horses exported for slaughter each year has varied since the practice began approximately 20 years ago, government data shows that from 2023-2025, between 1,811 and 3,265 horses were exported for slaughter each year.⁵ The horses are trucked from feedlots in rural Alberta and Manitoba to airports in Edmonton and Winnipeg. At the airport, workers commonly force the terrified horses out of the trucks by jabbing what appear to be livestock sticks indiscriminately and violently through the openings in the transport trucks.⁶

CFIA veterinarians attend the feedlot to inspect and test horses prior to export to ensure they are healthy. However, in contrast to horses exported for sport, breeding, or other purposes, horses exported for slaughter are crammed together in wooden crates, with three to four horses per crate. The horses are not trained or habituated for travel and are shipped in loads that generally contain 99 or more animals, leaving them in crowded conditions with little to no oversight and care during the long journey overseas. They are not given food or water during transport.

When horses finally arrive at Japanese quarantine facilities, exhausted and severely dehydrated, they are commonly sprayed directly with harsh disinfectant chemicals. Desperate for water, the horses have been shown to lick the harsh chemicals off the tarps covering their transport trucks, undoubtedly compounding the burning, irritation, and difficulty breathing caused by these chemicals. This is a practice that

⁵ See: <https://canadianhorsedefencecoalition.org/stats/>. Note that the number exported in 2025 is not yet known as data from the fourth quarter of 2025 is not yet publicly available.

⁶ See, e.g. <https://x.com/AnimalJustice/status/1501266150914727939>

would be illegal if done here in Canada. After quarantine, the horses are fattened, slaughtered and eaten as a raw delicacy in high-end restaurants.

For years, veterinary and animal welfare experts have raised the alarm about physical and psychological animal welfare risks associated with this practice.⁷

Known risks include:

- Hunger and distress, given that horses naturally graze for eight or more hours per day.
- Dehydration, which can occur on long haul flights after just 10-15 hours.⁸ Horses transported for over 24 hours are likely to be markedly to very severely dehydrated.
- Extreme fatigue, which horses demonstrate after 28 hours of transport.⁹ For horses exported overseas, this risk is compounded by the small wooden crates in which they are transported, which prevent them from moving freely and make it difficult for horses to take steps to adequately compensate for changes in inertia forces to maintain balance.¹⁰
- Extreme stress, leading to a suppressed immune system. This can cause a range of illnesses, including pleuropneumonia (also known as “shipping fever”). In fact, recent scientific research shows that even short road trips of under three hours can affect horses’ endocrine and immune function.¹¹

⁷ See, e.g. February 21 2024 brief submitted to the AGRI Standing Committee by 34 veterinarians and animal welfare experts:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/AGRI/Brief/BR12933246/br-external/jointly1-e.pdf>

⁸ M. Stewart et al, “The effects of air transport on the behaviour and heart rate of horses”, *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 80(2), Feb (2003) at pages 143-6.

⁹ T.H. Friend, “A review of recent research on the transportation of horses”, *Journal of Animal Science* 79:32-40 (2001).

¹⁰ B. Nivelle et al, “Horse transport to three South American horse slaughterhouses: A descriptive study”, *Animals* 10(4), 602 (2020).

¹¹ <https://www.horsetalk.co.nz/2023/10/23/road-trips-horses-endocrine-immune-function/>

- Falling and other injuries caused by confinement in wooden crates with other large, unfamiliar, and frightened horses, as well as loss of balance during turbulence, take-off, and landing.

Over the years, four private members' bills and one Senate public bill have been introduced to ban the export of horses for slaughter. In 2021, the Liberal Party of Canada made a commitment to end this cruel practice—a promise then reiterated in the mandate letter to the Minister of Agriculture.¹² Although a Liberal private member's bill was introduced in 2023, and passed the House of Commons in 2024, the bill was delayed in the Senate by then-Conservative Senate Leader Donald Plett. The bill died when the 2025 election was called.

2) Aftermath of Animal Justice's Bombshell Investigations in 2024

i) Non-compliance with 28-hour legal limit

When Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency revealed the export industry's flagrant disregard for the 28-hour legal limit for transporting horses without food, water, and rest in 2024, all export flights included a stop-over, most often in Alaska, before ultimately arriving in Japan. Following that investigation, the CFIA appears to have taken three main steps to bring more of the flights within this legal limit. Yet as the data below shows, the suffering continues.

¹² See: <https://liberal.ca/our-platform/protecting-animals/>; <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2021/12/16/minister-agriculture-and-agri-food-mandate-letter>.

First, in correspondence to Animal Justice the CFIA indicated that it has reminded exporters of their existing legal duty to have a contingency plan to prevent suffering, injury, or death as a result of unforeseen delays.

Second, the CFIA was previously relying on exporters' claims that after landing in Japan, horses arrived at quarantine facilities where they were back on food, water, and rest, within one and a half to two hours. Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency documented the fact that horses are not back on food, water, and rest until between three and six and a half hours of landing in Japan, putting most flights over the legal limit.¹³ As a result of what appears to have been years of flagrant violations of the legal time limit, the CFIA updated exporters' paperwork requirements such that they must now indicate when horses actually arrive at quarantine facilities after landing. The Agency has indicated that exporters have "modified their shipping logistics to mitigate the risk of non-compliance" with the 28-hour legal limit. This includes more direct flights to Japan. Still, a high proportion of shipments still appear to exceed the legal limit.

Finally, Carolyne Farms in Swan River, Manitoba is located a five to six hour drive away from the Winnipeg airport, making it virtually impossible for any horse shipments from that feedlot to comply with the 28-hour legal limit. ATIP records suggest that Carolyne Farms was aware since the 28-hour limit came into force in 2020 that compliance would be a "challenge". After our 2024 investigation showed all Winnipeg shipments exceeded the 28-hour legal limit, the CFIA approved the exporter's use of an interim feedlot closer to the airport, such that horses are now

¹³ The investigation showed that the process takes approximately 4.35 hours in Kitakyushu and between 4.93-6.5 hours at Kansai airport. Footage obtained in December 2024 showed that the process takes approximately three hours in Kagoshima.

trucked from Swan River to this interim feedlot the night before flights leave for Japan. As long as the horses are at the interim feedlot for more than eight hours, the food, water and rest clock re-starts, allowing some (though not all) shipments from Winnipeg to technically comply with the legal limit.

Animal Justice has raised several concerns with this approach:

- The first time this interim feedlot was used by Carolyne Farms in December 2024, Animal Justice obtained footage of a horse pinned under metal fencing, clearly distressed and struggling without help for an unknown amount of time, with no staff present to observe the horse or to assess or treat their injuries.¹⁴ Shortly after the incident, this horse was driven to the Winnipeg airport and shipped to Japan.
- Unloading horses for eight hours during transport restarts the legal clock given the definition of “rest” set out in the Health of Animals Regulations. However, as noted by animal welfare expert Dr. Moira Harris, breaking up the journey overnight in this way is unlikely to meaningfully protect the horses’ welfare, given the significant stress caused by a six hour drive, and the fact that loading and unloading are the most stressful elements of any kind of transport. In light of this, horses would need significant time to recover.¹⁵ Even though the horses may technically be free to eat, drink, and rest at the interim feedlot, they might not take much advantage of that in

¹⁴ See:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DG_cnXdpbkB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWEIZA==

¹⁵ See, e.g.

<https://animaljustice.ca/media-releases/manitoba-exporters-new-workaround-makes-transport-even-worse-for-horses>

reality, given the short duration during which they are at the feedlot before continuing their long journey overseas.

- The feedlot is owned by Patrick Houde—an individual whose treatment of horses has been investigated repeatedly by law enforcement, including for shipping a severely sick and injured horse to auction and failing to provide adequate care and medical attention to a foal found dead on his property. In a media interview about Canada's declining domestic horse slaughter industry, Houde stated: "What do you do with a horse? I've had some horses that won me thousands of dollars in the rodeo. When he was done, I put him on the (slaughter) truck."¹⁶
- In 1998, Houde was charged with assault after allegedly attacking a woman filming a documentary about the treatment of horses, rupturing her eardrum.¹⁷



Sign at front gate of interim feedlot owned by Pat Houde in Elm Creek, Manitoba

¹⁶ See: <https://www.manitobacooperator.ca/livestock/horse-meat-industry-in-decline/>

¹⁷ See: <https://www.producer.com/news/farmer-charged-in-horse-feedlot-altercation/>

ii) Failure to report deaths and injuries

The second investigation by Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency revealed that at least 22 horses shipped from Canada to Japan for slaughter between June 2023 and June 2024 died during transport or in the hours and days following.¹⁸ More than 50 others suffered painful injuries and health complications (e.g., fever, prolonged diarrhea) which appear to have been caused by the transport process.

The investigation, based on Government of Japan data, showed that after arriving in Japan, horses exported for slaughter are dying of dehydration, stress, pneumonia, and other medical conditions, including painful miscarriages. The data also showed a troubling pattern of inadequate veterinary care and monitoring during transport and after the horses' arrival in Japan.

None of these deaths and injuries were reflected in the CFIA's records. In fact, at the time the Agency was aware of no horse deaths related to air shipments to Japan since 2015, despite exporters being legally required to report mortalities and significant injuries.¹⁹

The CFIA called the 2024 investigation "troubling" and promised to communicate with export and transport companies about their reporting obligations.²⁰ In correspondence to Animal Justice the Agency indicated that it has reminded air carriers of their existing legal obligation to report deaths and injuries during flights.

¹⁸ See <https://animaljustice.ca/blog/21-horses-killed-in-shipments> (June 2023-May 2024 data); <https://animaljustice.ca/blog/another-deadly-month-for-horses> (June 2024 data)

¹⁹ See: February 29, 2024 testimony of Dr. Mary Jane Ireland before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food:

www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/AGRI/meeting-94/evidence (p4)

²⁰ See, e.g. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/horses-japan-aircraft-1.7321374>

It appears to have updated exporters' paperwork requirements to emphasize their existing duty to report injuries and deaths during flights.

Since the release of our investigation, the CFIA has updated its website to acknowledge only one death and eight serious injuries from July 2023 - June 2024. They claim there have been zero deaths or serious injuries since then. The new data outlined in this report contradicts this claim.²¹

Transport outcomes (deaths and serious injuries)

The following table provides a summary of reported serious incidents involving horses during transport, up to and including unloading at the airport in Japan.

Time period	Number of horse deaths	Number of serious injuries in horses	Horses exported
July 2024 to June 2025	0	0	2408
July 2023 to June 2024	1	8	3171

CFIA-“Regulatory oversight for live horse exports to Japan”

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/horses/regulatory-oversight>

New Government of Japan data from September 2024 - July 2025 reveals that exporters continue to under-report deaths and injuries in horses exported from Canada to Japan for slaughter. An alarming and unacceptable number of horses are continuing to suffer injury, illness, and death due to feed and water deprivation, crowding, and the long duration of shipping without rest breaks.

²¹ Notably, downed or “fallen” horses are still not being included in CFIA injury counts, even when the horse is non-ambulatory upon landing or when they sustain such significant injuries that they are euthanized shortly after landing. The CFIA explicitly does not report any serious injuries, illnesses, or deaths that occur after the moment the plane lands in Japan, even when that death, injury, or illness is directly caused by the transport process.

The Government of Japan now provides some data to the CFIA concerning the fate of horses after their arrival in Japan. For instance, aggregate charts have been provided intermittently, summarizing some injuries and deaths but not all. The vast majority of illnesses and injuries documented in the data analyzed in this report were not included in these aggregate charts, or in any other records provided to the CFIA. Instead, most of the data comes from handwritten notes made during the horses' stay in quarantine.

Because these quarantine records are in the form of handwritten notes that have been scanned onto a computer, most are unreadable. Consequently, the injuries and illnesses documented below likely represent only a fraction of the true number of deaths, injuries and illnesses affecting Canadian horses shipped to Japan for slaughter.

3) Unreported Injuries, Illnesses, and Deaths continue

From September 2024 - September 2025, available data²² reveals the following:

- **At least 9 horses died** as a result of transport to Japan for slaughter. None are reflected in CFIA records for these shipments, and none were reported by exporters.²³
- **At least 29 horses collapsed** during flights. At least two suffered such significant injuries that they had to be euthanized shortly after landing.

²² Note that we were unable to obtain Japanese records for six shipments reflected in the records below. As such, the full extent of deaths, injuries, and illnesses in those shipments is unknown. Even for many of the shipments for which data from both countries is available, the Japanese quarantine records were handwritten and difficult to decipher. For these reasons, the numbers in this report are likely a fraction of the full scale of suffering caused by the export of horses for slaughter.

²³ In approximately December 2024, Japanese officials appear to have provided an aggregate chart to the CFIA which does reflect five of these deaths, which occurred in November 2024.

Another was removed from the plane, likely via forklift, because they could not stand. One was forced to stand despite significant bleeding. Exporters reported some of the falls to the CFIA, but each time indicated that none of the horses suffered injuries.

- **More than 290 horses suffered injuries and illness** after landing in Japan. Common signs of illness include dangerously high fevers, diarrhea, and purulent (thick, yellow-green) nasal discharge. Injuries included large bleeding lacerations on horses' legs, missing portions of ears and hooves, and a significant number of leg and hoof injuries, many described as festered. Some horses appeared to receive some medical treatment, but the vast majority appear to have received none. None of these injuries and illnesses are reflected in the CFIA's records.
- **Approximately five shipments exceeded the 28-hour legal limit** for transporting horses without food, water, and rest.²⁴ Ultimately, compliance with this limit is still based on exporters' self-reporting so it is difficult to determine with certainty how many shipments are in compliance with this time limit. It is not uncommon for exporters to report that shipments make it minutes under the 28-hour legal limit.

²⁴ For several shipments there are discrepancies in exporters' records, or contradicting information from eyewitness accounts vs. exporters' accounts of when the transport journey began and ended. For this reason, this number is an approximation.

Deaths, Injuries, & Illnesses in Recent Horse Shipments to Japan

23

Shipments listed

9

Recorded deaths

292

Injuries and illnesses

26.58 hrs

Average travel time

Origin Airport	Destination Airport	Date of Departure	Duration of Travel	Deaths	Cause of Death	Injured or Sick Horses
YEG	Kansai	2024/09/03	25.88 hrs	0		27
YEG	Kansai	2024/09/23	26.08 hrs	0		15
YEG	Kitakyushu	2024/10/07	25.00 hrs	0		43
YEG	Kitakyushu	2024/10/21	25.50 hrs	Unknown*		1*
YEG	Kitakyushu	2024/11/05	26.82 hrs	3	1x Catarrhal enteritis 1x Enterotoxemia 1x Colitis and circulatory failure	22
YEG	Kitakyushu	2024/11/18	26.50 hrs	2*	2x Intestinal Torsion and Transport Stress	Unknown*
YEG	Kansai	2024/11/25	29.58 hrs	0		24
YEG	Kitakyushu	2024/12/02	26.03 hrs	0		23
YWG	Kagoshima	2024/12/16	25.17 hrs	1	1x Exhaustion Including Seizures and Chronic Enteritis	11
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/02/03	28.17 hrs	0		6
YEG	Kansai	2025/02/18	28.87-28.62 hrs	0		10
YWG	Kitakyushu	2025/02/24	26.25 hrs	0		12
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/03/03	27.92 hrs	Unknown*		1*
YEG	Kansai	2025/03/11	26.87 hrs	0		9
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/03/17	27.07 hrs	1	1x Open Fracture (Euthanized)	4
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/04/14	28.92 hrs	0		10
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/05/11	24.68 hrs	1	1x Cervical Phlegmon and Pneumonia	32
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/06/02	27.58 hrs	Unknown*		2*
YEG	Kansai	2025/06/09	26.33 hrs	0		14
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/06/23	27.92-28.92 hrs	1	1x Open Dislocation	12
YEG	Kansai	2025/07/08	23.78 hrs	0		8
YEG	Kansai	2025/09/07	24.67 hrs	Unknown*		3*
YEG	Kitakyushu	2025/09/15	26.70 hrs	Unknown*		3*

*Shipments missing Japanese data

Though this report focuses on records showing horse deaths, injuries, and illness, it is important to note that even horses who survive the journey without apparent physical complications will often suffer significant fear, exhaustion, and stress due to lengthy transport under loud, unfamiliar, and dangerous conditions without food, water, and rest. All horses exported from Canada for slaughter overseas are at risk of significant psychological distress.

II. New Government of Japan Data

In partnership with the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition and Japan-based Life Investigation Agency, Animal Justice was able to obtain and analyze data from the governments of both Canada and Japan for the following shipments from September 2024 - July 2025.

1) September 3, 2024

Shipment details: 119 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 25.88 hours

Injuries/illnesses: 15 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 5 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 3 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 1 horse with a bulging, swollen abdomen

CFIA records indicate that all horses arrived in Japan in “Good” condition, and do not contain any data on the condition of the horses following their arrival in Japan.

According to Japanese handwritten quarantine records, at least 24 horses were found to be seriously injured and ill during quarantine, including the following:

- One horse's leg was caught during unloading.
- Five horses had lacerations, with some bleeding or infected, one so badly that the superintendent indicated that "maggots might infest".
- One horse had impaired vision/cloudiness in the right eye.
- One horse had a hoof injury.
- Four horses had swollen legs or fetlocks, with one horse avoiding weight application on the affected limb.
- One horse had a fetlock injury that was festered and swollen.
- One horse had a bulging/swollen abdomen.
- Three horses had leg wounds, and one horse's wound kept opening and was festered.
- Two horses had wounds near their eyes.
- Five horses were avoiding putting weight on one of their legs, likely due to injuries.
- Three horses had prolonged rapid breathing. The cause of this abnormal breathing is not noted, but both pleuropneumonia (shipping fever) and pain (caused by colic or injuries) are among common causes of prolonged rapid breathing in horses.²⁵

Unfortunately, most of the Japanese records related to this shipment were illegible due to low resolution of the documents and/or unclear handwriting. Based on the records, it appears that this shipment likely involved additional injuries and illnesses, as several other horses were referenced in the documents.

²⁵ Dorothy M Ainsworth & Richard P Hackett, "Disorders of the Respiratory System" in *Equine Internal Medicine*, 2nd ed (St Louis: Saunders, 2004) at 324–25, online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-72-169777-1/50009-3>; see also <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8743789>; <https://madbarn.com/difficulty-breathing-in-horses>

2) September 23, 2024

Shipment details: 112 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.08 hours

Injuries/illnesses: 11 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 5 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 6 horses with bleeding/lacerations

Two horses were found lying down in their crates during this flight. Both times, the exporter's attendant shook a rattle at the horse and they stood up. CFIA records indicate that all horses in this shipment arrived in Japan in "Good" condition, and do not contain any data on the condition of the horses after landing.

According to Japanese handwritten quarantine records, more than a dozen horses were found injured or ill during the quarantine period, including the following:

- Three horses had injuries that were bleeding—one on/near the hoof, one from a cut on the mouth, and one horse with a double leg injury that was bleeding.
- One horse had lacerations, a swollen fetlock, and a festered hoof.
- One horse had lacerations, an injured and swollen left eyelid blocking half their eye and was noted as not eating much.
- One horse had lacerations with swelling on the chest area and a wound on the underarm of their left front leg.
- Two horses had festered hoofs, and two additional horses had swollen or injured fetlocks.²⁶

²⁶ "Festered hoof" refers to hoof abscess, an acutely painful condition that requires drainage and antiseptic treatment. Hoof abscesses can take weeks or months to resolve with appropriate

- Two horses had swollen fetlocks and eye injuries/discharge, with one horse's eye having a notably large amount of discharge.
- One horse had excessive discharge from the right eye.
- One horse had a swollen "glabella area" (an area in the centre of the forehead).
- One horse was limping.
- Several horses were noted as avoiding putting weight on their legs, likely due to injuries.

3) October 7, 2024

Shipment details: 114 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 25 hours

Injuries/illness: 3-4 horses fell during the flight; 14 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 15 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 14 horses with hoof/leg injuries; 5 horses with diarrhea; 6 horses ill with nasal discharge; 2 horses with fever; 1 horse fell during quarantine

The exporter's attendant reported to the CFIA that three to four horses were down at various points in the flight, indicating that they just needed "a little rest" and that there were no injuries during this shipment. Government of Japan records indicate that three horses fell during the flight.

Upon testing at the quarantine facility, two horses were diagnosed with purulent (pus-like) nasal discharge, one horse from both nostrils, and one horse from the left nostril. Purulent discharge can be a sign of advanced bacterial infection, head

treatment, and sepsis can result if left untreated. See, e.g. <https://madbarn.com/hoof-problems-in-horses/#abscess>

trauma, or respiratory infections such as “strangles” or pleuropneumonia (shipping fever).²⁷ One of the horses was also suffering from diarrhea. Records indicate that the horses were symptomatic for the entire duration of their quarantine. There is no information regarding any medication or treatment given to the horses.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records also indicate that a significant number of other horses from this shipment sustained injuries and fell ill, including the following:

- One horse had a growth on her hoof.
- One horse had a stiff/unstable leg.
- Three horses had face wounds (including bleeding wounds).
- One horse had a fever and eye discharge.
- One horse had a fever of 39.7 degrees Celsius. Research indicates that approximately 6.6–10.9% of horses transported long distances develop a fever within the first 12 to 24 hours after transport, often due to stress, dehydration, and restricted movement.²⁸
- Four horses, in addition to the ones mentioned above, had nasal discharge though the records do not indicate whether it was clear or purulent (thick, yellow/green).
- Four horses had eye discharge, one with bloodshot eyes.
- One horse had a wound on her nasal bridge and was bleeding.

²⁷ See, e.g. <https://madbarn.com/nasal-discharge-in-horses;>
https://madbarn.ca/shipping-fever-in-horses/?srsId=AfmBOoqNQSC7ImDv9GMYZ78zmpiGb3vFjgHv mf5yOPbs1xCej_rQ_ycZ

²⁸ See, e.g. [https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/111209/managing-and-preventing-transport-associated-fever#:~:text=Additionally%2C%20traveling%20horses%20commonly%20become,lung%20and%20the%20pleural%20cavity\).](https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/111209/managing-and-preventing-transport-associated-fever#:~:text=Additionally%2C%20traveling%20horses%20commonly%20become,lung%20and%20the%20pleural%20cavity).)

- Three horses had injuries to their legs/bodies severe enough to cause bleeding.
- One horse had swelling of the front left leg.
- One horse had a bleeding fetlock injury and a swollen pastern.
- Two horses had nasal bridge injuries that were bleeding.
- Four horses had diarrhea, including one with a facial wound and one with a swollen jaw.
- Six horses had coronet/hoof injuries, several of which were bleeding.²⁹
- Two horses were bleeding from the nose/nostril.
- One horse had an eye injury and was bleeding.
- Two horses had hock wounds, one on both back legs that were bleeding.
- One horse fell, had a bleeding injury and nasal discharge.
- One horse had a knee injury and was bleeding.
- One horse had prolonged, fast breathing. As noted above, this is a known symptom of infections including pleuropneumonia (shipping fever) or pain.

Japanese quarantine notes also indicate that several horses were not eating while in quarantine. After long-distance transport, it is common for horses to refuse to eat due to high stress levels, dehydration, or digestive health problems.³⁰

Eleven horses in this shipment were found to have elevated hematocrit ("HCT") levels—a condition known as erythrocytosis, most often caused by dehydration or

²⁹ The coronet or coronary band is the junction between the hair-producing skin of the horse's lower limb and the hoof wall

³⁰ See, e.g. <https://www.equinechronicle.com/dealing-with-horses-that-go-off-feed-after-transport/>

splenic contraction in horses.³¹ Transporting horses in stressful conditions for extended durations puts them at risk of both dehydration as well as splenic contraction—a condition that can be caused by extreme fear or pain causing sympathetic activation (the “fight-or-flight” response).³² Similarly, pleuropneumonia (shipping fever) can result in endotoxemia, another condition known to cause high HCT levels in horses.³³

Three horses in this shipment had elevated white blood cell (“WBC”) counts—a condition called leukocytosis—indicating that their bodies were under significant stress. Stressors can include bacterial or viral infection, inflammation, and horses’ physiological “fight or flight” response triggered by stressful events, including long-haul transport.³⁴

4) November 4, 2024

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.82 hours

³¹ See, e.g. https://www.merckvetmanual.com/circulatory-system/erythrocytosis-polycythemia/erythrocytosis-in-horses#Absolute-Erythrocytosis_v86119264

³² See, e.g. [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8935158/#:~:text=Stress%20in%20horses%20can%20be,McGowan%20&%20Hodgson%2C%202014\);](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8935158/#:~:text=Stress%20in%20horses%20can%20be,McGowan%20&%20Hodgson%2C%202014);)
<http://juliet84.free.fr/Hematologie/Veterinary%20Laboratory%20Medicine2.pdf> (PDF pp28-30);
<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/5/4/412>

³³ See, e.g. [https://canadianthoroughbred.com/magazine/health/causes-treatment-equine-pleuropneumonia/#:~:text=Once%20a%20bacterial%20pneumonia%20reaches,choke\)%20and%20secondary%20aspirati on%20pneumonia.](https://canadianthoroughbred.com/magazine/health/causes-treatment-equine-pleuropneumonia/#:~:text=Once%20a%20bacterial%20pneumonia%20reaches,choke)%20and%20secondary%20aspirati on%20pneumonia.)

³⁴ See: <https://www.merckvetmanual.com/horse-owners/blood-disorders-of-horses/white-blood-cell-disorders-of-horses>; see also <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10276830/>

Deaths: 3 horses died: 1 horse died of catarrhal enteritis due to transport stress. 1 horse died of Enterotoxemia. 1 horse died of colitis and circulatory failure.

Injuries/Illnesses: 1 horse collapsed during flight; 12 horses with fevers; 7 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 9 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 7 horses with diarrhea; 1 horse ill with purulent nasal discharge, 1 horse with a festered wound; 1 horse fell during quarantine

This flight was particularly lethal, with three horses dying shortly after arrival in Japan. None of the deaths are reflected in the CFIA's records for this shipment.³⁵

The exporter's attendant reported to the CFIA that one horse fell during the flight, but that there were no injuries during the flight as the horse was moving normally when entering the transport truck to quarantine and their health condition was "Good". Japanese records indicate that this horse was lying on her stomach on the ground. Based on available records, it is unclear what ultimately happened to this horse during quarantine.

Government of Japan records further indicate that one horse had a fever and diarrhea that began on the first day of quarantine. On the third day of quarantine, the horse was diagnosed with watery diarrhea and died. The cause of death is listed as "*catarrhal enteritis caused by the stress from transportation*". This is a form of intestinal inflammation caused by bacterial or viral infections, leading to severe abdominal pain (colic), fever, diarrhea, and dehydration.³⁶ As noted above, bacterial species found in a healthy animal (carrier) can cause clinical disease in a stressed

³⁵ As noted above, it appears that in approximately December 2024, officials in Japan provided a summary of some horse deaths from May-December 2024 to the CFIA and these three deaths are reflected in the aggregate chart created approximately one month after the shipment.

³⁶ See: <https://madbarn.com/salmonella-infection-in-horses>

animal.³⁷ When horses are subjected to extreme stress like air transport, the bacteria can rapidly multiply and cause serious illness and even death, as occurred with this horse.

A second horse was observed to have a fever and diarrhea on the first day of quarantine. The horse died the next day. The suspected cause of death is listed as "*Enterotoxemia caused by the growth of C. perfringens and Escherichia coli*".

Enterotoxemia in horses is a severe intestinal disease caused by the rapid overgrowth of bacteria in the gut, leading to severe diarrhea, colic, and necrotic enteritis.³⁸ It is known to occur in foals in the first days of life, and in adult horses who are subjected to stress and food deprivation during lengthy transport journeys.³⁹

A third horse was also observed to have a fever on the first day of quarantine. That horse died during the night, showing "significant abdominal distention". The suspected cause of death was due to "*colitis and circulatory failure*". Again, colitis is a painful condition involving severe inflammation of the large colon, often causing severe diarrhea, dehydration, endotoxemia, and colic.⁴⁰ It is often caused by infections linked to transport stress.⁴¹

³⁷ See: <https://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics/salmonellosis>

³⁸ See: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0300985811404710>

³⁹ See: <https://www.merckvetmanual.com/digestive-system/infectious-diarrheal-diseases-in-horses/clostridial-enterocolitis-in-horses>; see also <https://aaep.org/resource/clostridial-diarrhea-enteritis/>; <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/5/4/412>

⁴⁰ See: <https://madbarn.com/colitis-in-horses/>

⁴¹ See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1558787815000246>

Test result data indicates that two of the horses that died had a suspected association with *clostridium perfringens*—a deadly bacteria that can cause necrotic enteritis. Clinical symptoms include colic, lethargy, depression, pyrexia and bloody diarrhea, neurologic symptoms and death.⁴²

On the second day of quarantine, another horse was found limping, with apparent injuries on both front legs that were bleeding, and later developed diarrhea and a fever. Government of Japan records suggest that it was not until the seventh day of quarantine that the horse received medical attention, eventually causing her fever to subside. There is no indication in the records that the other three severely ill horses, all of whom died, received any medical treatment.

According to Japanese handwritten quarantine records, at least 20 other horses were also injured and ill, including the following:

- Four horses had fevers (in addition to those above).
- One horse had a fever, stiff leg(s), and a bleeding wound.
- Three horses had a fever and diarrhea.
- One horse had diarrhea.
- Two horses avoided weight application on their legs, likely due to an injury.
- Three horses had some form of bleeding injury.
- Three horses had leg/coronet injuries, some that were actively bleeding.
- One horse had purulent nasal discharge and wounds on the left coronet that were bleeding. The coronet is a sensitive area of the foot where the hoof wall forms.

⁴² See:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/laboratory-biosafety-biosecurity/pathogen-safety-data-sheets-risk-assessment/clostridium-perfringens.html>

- One horse had a festered wound.
- One horse fell.

5) November 25, 2024

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: The exporter reported to the CFIA that the duration was 27.5 hours. CFIA observed the actual duration was at least **29.58 hours**.

Injuries/illness: 1 horse down upon landing with serious injury and significant bleeding; 1 injured horse fell when being loaded and was apparently forced to stand using a rope; 20 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 3 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 1 horse with bleeding/lacerations; 3 horses ill with purulent nasal discharge; 2 horses with difficulty standing/down; 1 horse with outer ear missing

Although the horse exporter reported to the CFIA that the horses had access to food, water and rest at the final destination (quarantine facility in Japan) after 27.5 hours of travel, the CFIA observed that Japanese records show the actual duration of transport was 29 hours and 35 minutes. This shipment went at least one hour and 35 minutes over the legal limit of 28 hours.

The exporter reported to the CFIA that “all horses arrived safely”, that their health status was "Good," and that there were "no fallen horses". The exporter acknowledged that one horse refused to leave their crate when the plane landed, but reported that the horse that transporters had “difficulty with” was not injured.

Contrary to these reports, handwritten Japanese quarantine reports indicate that one horse was found lying on her side upon arrival at Kansai airport. She had wounds on her front right leg and was bleeding. Despite her injuries, a subsequent note states that “the horse was forced to stand up” for loading onto the transport truck and that there was “a lot of blood on the floor.” These handwritten quarantine notes directly contradict CFIA records.

Japanese records show the horse’s wounds were “almost dry” two days later on November 28, and the scabs were “coming off soon” on December 2. There are no notes or indications that this horse received any medical treatment.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records further indicate that more than 20 horses from this shipment were injured or ill, including a disturbing account of a horse who was limping, dragging her back leg, and having trouble standing for at least five days during the second half of the quarantine period. On the day that the horses were due to be loaded into transport trucks and shipped to Japanese feedlots to be fattened for slaughter, the horse—still limping on her back right leg—fell down when being loaded onto the transport truck and had difficulty getting up. Though the quarantine notes are difficult to decipher, it appears that they then mention the word “rope” followed by “standing”.

Other instances of illness and injury include the following:

- One horse was missing an outer ear. There are many potential causes of missing outer ears, including frost bite, autoimmune conditions, and physical trauma during transport.
- Five horses had leg wounds, several with noted swelling.

- One horse had purulent nasal discharge—as noted above, this is a common symptom of bacterial infection, shipping fever, or other respiratory diseases.
- One horse had a festered hoof and swelling on the back left leg (fetlock/pastern area).
- Eight horses had swollen legs/joints.
- One horse had a swollen leg/joint and purulent nasal discharge.
- Two horses were unable to stand/had difficulty standing with swollen fetlocks.
- One horse had a facial wound above the eye.
- One horse had a facial wound near the eye, purulent nasal discharge, and swelling on her cannon/leg.
- One horse had a swollen nasal bridge.

6) December 2, 2024

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.03 - 27.53 hours (discrepancies in CFIA records)

Injuries/illness: 1 horse collapsed during flight; 9 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 9 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 5 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 5 horses with diarrhea; 1 horse with fever; 1 horse with anemia

Following the release of investigations by Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency in 2024 showing horse exporters' widespread non-compliance with the Health of Animals Regulations, the CFIA paid this exporter for Dr. Mary Jane Ireland, the Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada, and another CFIA representative to travel to Japan with this shipment to observe the unloading and transport process in

Japan. In planning their itinerary, CFIA representatives were assured that they would have access to food and water on the long flight, and that all humans on the flight stay on the second floor away from the horses on the first floor of the plane given that the second floor is where “it is temperature controlled and comfortable”. A “special meal” was arranged for one of the officers.

Furthermore, because the drive from the Alberta feedlot to the airport takes approximately 2.5 hours, the transport itinerary emphasized the need for CFIA representatives to eat before departing from their hotel and to bring snacks and water for the drive. The itinerary also included stops during the drive for coffee and snacks, and to pick up additional water and food. It further included instructions for CFIA representatives to bring winter clothing, as well as food and water, for their time observing loading at the airport. They were also assured that there would be a designated area for them to warm up given the frigid temperatures.

The CFIA noted a desire to keep the representatives’ itinerary in Japan light the day after arrival in case “there is still residual trauma about flying and [to provide] time to recover before meetings” [emphasis added].

In contrast, 99 horses made this same journey without food, water, or rest, and without anywhere to warm themselves or recover for nearly 28 hours. One horse went down on the flight, and at least 22 other horses were found to be injured or ill after landing in Japan.

Although the exporter’s attendant on the flight noted that one horse was down at the time of landing in Anchorage, Alaska, CFIA records indicate that there were no

injuries. Japanese records reveal that the downed horse remained lying on her side for approximately two hours during the flight. There is no further information to indicate why this horse was down, however, being down in the crate for two hours would have put this horse at significant risk of injury as she was in a crate with two other horses. Records have consistently demonstrated that fallen horses commonly experience injuries from being stepped on by other horses in the shipping crates.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records indicate the following horses were found to be injured or ill after arrival in Japan:

- One horse had a bleeding leg and a hoof that was cracked and coming off, was experiencing diarrhea, and was in “visible pain”, with anemia and a low appetite.
- One horse had an eye wound that was "gouged", eye discharge, and was at different times down and limping.
- Two horses had leg wounds and were avoiding applying weight on their legs, both were bleeding and one was described as “gouged”.
- One horse had swelling and noted pain in the left leg.
- Two horses had wounds and diarrhea (one wound being on the eye).
- One horse had purulent nasal discharge, a bump on nasal bridge that was noted as growing in size, was “wheezing”, and had swelling on the right side of the face. The records do not indicate a cause of these symptoms, but purulent nasal discharge and wheezing are symptoms consistent with pleuropneumonia (shipping fever).
- Three horses had purulent nasal discharge. As noted above, purulent nasal discharge in horses can indicate a bacterial infection, severe inflammation, or other health problems. One of these horses had also been bleeding.

- Two horses had diarrhea, one described as “water-like”.
- One horse had a fever that reached 41.1 degrees Celsius—a temperature that is considered extremely high and dangerous, and can even be fatal.
- One horse’s tooth fell out.
- Five horses had facial wounds, including some that were bleeding.
- One horse had a cracked hoof. While the cause is not noted in the records, it is worth noting that lengthy transport can cause or aggravate cracked hooves in horses.
- One horse had stiff back legs. Causes of stiff back legs are varied, but include muscle strains, tears, or ligament damage caused by injuries.⁴³
- One horse had a festered injury on their front left leg.

Fifteen horses in this shipment also had elevated HCT levels or WBC counts. As explained above, this is indicative of significant stress and may be caused by serious infection and inflammation.

7) December 16, 2024

Shipment details: 86 horses (Winnipeg to Kagoshima) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: The exporter reported that the duration was 25.17 hours. Time stamped footage shows that the actual duration was at least 26.75 hours, and that the exporter misreported both the start and end of the transport process. This calculation does not include transport from Swan River, MB to an interim feedlot the day before the shipment, during which the horses were without food, water, and rest for an additional 6.5 hrs.

Deaths: 1 horse died from Chronic Enteritis associated with Salmonella

⁴³ See: <https://cavecreekequine.com/blog/lameness-in-horses/>

Injuries/illness: 8 horses with fevers; 3 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 4 horses with diarrhea; 1 horse with bleeding/lacerations

December 16, 2024, marked the three-year anniversary of the Minister of Agriculture’s mandate letter commitment to ban the export of horses for slaughter.⁴⁴ Yet on that very day, a shipment of horses was flown out of Winnipeg. The exporter reported to the CFIA that the horses had access to food, water, and rest until loading began at 5:40 pm, and that the total duration without food, water, and rest was 25.17 hours. However, Animal Justice was present to observe loading at the feedlot and time-stamped footage indicates that loading began much earlier—at approximately 4:00 pm.

Because Bill C-355, aimed at banning horse exports for slaughter, had passed the House of Commons and was being debated in the Senate, then-Conservative Senate leader Donald Plett—an ardent critic of the Bill—was at the airport to observe the loading process. He used his attendance to bolster his repeated, and largely unsubstantiated, claims that exporting horses for slaughter does not pose risks to animal welfare.⁴⁵

In video footage taken at the airport by Animal Justice, a worker can be seen hitting a horse in the face as the horse attempts to exit the transport truck.⁴⁶ Shortly

⁴⁴ See:

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2021/12/16/minister-agriculture-and-agri-food-mandate-letter>

⁴⁵ See, e.g.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/senators-spar-over-bill-banning-horse-export-to-japan-animal-advocates-fear-time-is-running-out-1.7409922>

⁴⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-zrHPvdXY6jOnJV7Szsya2UdxVFEntHA/view?t=43> (clip at 0:43)

afterward, then-Senator Plett can be seen talking and smiling with staff as the horses are moved from the transport truck to the crates.



Then-Conservative Senate Leader Donald Plett at the Winnipeg airport on December 15, 2024

i) Pre-transport injuries

This was the first known shipment in which Carolyle Farms sent horses to an interim feedlot the night before the flight to Japan. Drone footage taken at the interim feedlot on December 15 shows a horse pinned under a metal gate, desperately trying to free themselves and in an apparent state of panic.⁴⁷ No workers or feedlot operators appeared to have been present to witness the incident or tend to the horse's injuries afterward. Hours after finally freeing themselves, and after receiving no veterinary care for their injuries, the horse was sent on a nearly 28-hour journey to Japan.

⁴⁷ See:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DG_cnXdpbkB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWEIZA==

As noted above, the industry's own guidelines indicate that horses should not be unloaded at unfamiliar fenced in areas in the dark, yet this is precisely what occurred during this shipment. The horses were unloaded at the interim feedlot late at night on December 15. Animal Justice reported this incident to both the CFIA and Manitoba's Chief Veterinary Office. The Office confirmed it was investigating the incident but has not revealed whether any enforcement action was ultimately taken.

ii) Deaths and injuries

CFIA records do not report any deaths or injuries associated with this shipment. In fact, the condition of the horses was reported as "Good".

However, Government of Japan records reveal that shortly after arriving at quarantine, one horse was found with lacerations 15cm in diameter on both the lower leg and the cannon of the back right leg. The muscle was exposed and pus was coming out. At the quarantine facility, the wounds were cleaned with flowing water and sterilized twice a day with "Acrinol". If this horse was sprayed directly with chemical disinfectant upon arrival at the facility—a common and well-documented practice—this would have undoubtedly exacerbated their pain caused by this large open wound.

On the sixth day of quarantine, the wounds were swelling and the horse was avoiding applying weight on their back right leg. Records indicate that the horse was given an antibiotic drug, "Mycillin", which appears to be a Japanese product. Three days later, notes indicate that the amount of pus from the wounds had

decreased, the swelling had improved, and the horse was able to apply more weight. There are no further notes on the horse's condition.

Government of Japan records further indicate that one horse had a serious fever, ranging from 40.4 degrees Celsius to 46.5 degrees Celsius, which is well past the threshold for heatstroke, a life-threatening illness that is caused by central nervous system dysfunction.⁴⁸ According to records, this horse suffered for three days with a critically high fever, appetite loss, and watery diarrhea, with signs of severe dehydration like *enophthalmos* (sunken eye), before succumbing to seizures and finally dying on December 21, 2024. Cause of death was reported as "*death due to the weakened state caused by chronic enteritis (suspected association with Salmonella serogroup O4)*". As noted above, chronic enteritis involves inflammation of the small intestine, and is commonly caused by infections in horses, as well as stress from transport. The condition is characterized by symptoms like colic, diarrhea, lethargy, and weight loss and is seen in horses who are subjected to extreme stress.

Salmonellosis is a common condition to see and treat in equine medicine. Despite this, there are no records indicating medication was administered to treat this horse's diarrhea and fever. Without medical treatment and pain relief, this horse would have experienced severe, prolonged, and unnecessary suffering prior to death. The death is not mentioned in the CFIA's records.

Japanese data also reveals that two other horses were ill with dangerously high fevers during quarantine. One horse had a fever that reached 40.7 degrees Celsius and the second horse had a fever that reached 39.4 degrees Celsius. *Equine*

⁴⁸ See: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00484-023-02467-7>

influenza 'LAMP' tests were done the eighth day of quarantine, and the results were negative. Records indicate that one horse's fever subsided on the eighth day, yet there are no notes indicating whether the other horse's fever ever went down. The notes appear to indicate that neither horse received medical treatment to reduce their fevers and no further investigation into other possible causes was conducted.

In addition to the above, the following injuries and illnesses were also noted in Japanese handwritten quarantine records:

- Four additional horses had fevers.
- One horse had a fever and diarrhea.
- Two horses had leg wounds/pain and diarrhea.
- One horse had a leg wound near the hoof.

8) February 3, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu)(stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 28.17 hours

Injuries/illness: 4 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 3 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 1 horse with purulent nasal discharge; 1 horse with diarrhea; Unknown number of fallen horses

Based on the exporter's own records, this flight exceeded the legal limit for time horses are allowed to be transported without feed, water, or rest. According to CFIA records, departure was delayed at least three hours because it was so cold at the Edmonton airport that the lift used to put the crates into the aircraft broke down. Consequently, these horses were not only transported for hours to the airport in extreme winter weather, they were also left waiting on the tarmac or in an open-air

airport hangar in frigid temperatures for hours while the mechanical issues were resolved.

CFIA records suggest there were no injuries on this flight and that the horses' condition on arrival was "Good". According to Japanese records, the attendant reported that no horses fell during the flight. However, further notes in the Japanese records contradict this claim, stating that "all horses, including the fallen ones, showed good vitality."

Japanese records reveal that seven horses had elevated HCT levels or WBC counts, which results from acute stress and can indicate a range of serious infections, such as pneumonia, and severe inflammation. They also indicate the following illnesses and injuries:

- One horse had watery diarrhea.
- One horse had purulent nasal discharge from both nostrils. As noted above, purulent nasal discharge in horses is generally indicative of bacterial infection, extreme inflammation, or other health problems.
- One horse had a nosebleed.
- Three horses had hoof injuries and were bleeding.

Japanese quarantine notes also indicate that one horse was not eating. As noted above, reduced appetite is common in horses following long transport, generally caused by stress, dehydration, fatigue, and/or gastric health problems.

9) February 18, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 27.87 hours. The exporter reported that the horses had access to food, water, and rest until 9:00 pm on February 17, but CFIA records suggest trucks began leaving the feedlot at 9:15 pm for the airport. This makes it virtually impossible that this shipment made it under the 28-hour limit as claimed. Duration was likely at least **28.62 hours**.

Illnesses/injuries: 4 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 4 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 2 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 1 horse ill with purulent nasal discharge; 1 horse with a deformed jaw

CFIA records indicate that all horses arrived safely in Japan, there were zero injuries, and the condition status of all 99 horses was “Good”.

Japanese handwritten records reveal that one horse was stepped on while exiting the transport truck upon arrival at the quarantine facility. In addition, numerous other horses are noted as suffering injuries and illnesses, including:

- One horse was bleeding from the forehead.
- One horse had swelling on both front legs.
- One horse experienced swelling on the right cheek below the right eye.
- One horse had a deformed jaw/mass on the jaw and swelling on the muzzle.
- One horse had a leg injury (fetlock).
- One horse had a hematoma on the back right leg that had been bleeding and burst.⁴⁹
- One horse had a mass over the right side of the lips and cheek.

⁴⁹ Hematomas are localized collections of blood in an area of tissue, usually caused by trauma. See: <https://www.aqha.com/-/horse-health-issues-hematom-1>.

- One horse had purulent nasal discharge. As noted above, this is generally caused by infection, severe inflammation, or other health problems.
- One horse was limping on their front left leg.
- One horse had a swollen left eyelid that caused difficulty opening the eye.

10) February 24, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Winnipeg to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.25 - 27.25 hours. There is a discrepancy between when the exporter reported that the loading process began and what was observed by an individual monitoring from the nearby highway. It appears that loading began approximately 1.17 hours earlier than the exporter reported to the CFIA. The journey from Swan River to the interim feedlot the day prior was approximately 6.5 hours and is not included in this calculation.

Injuries/illnesses: 4 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 4 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 3 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 3 horses with diarrhea; 1 horse with purulent nasal discharge; 1 horse unable to stand

As noted above, following the 2024 investigation by Animal Justice and Life Investigation Agency showing that all shipments of horses from Manitoba to Japan for slaughter exceeded the 28-hour limit for transport without food, water, and rest, the export company (Carolyle Farms Ltd.) uses an interim feedlot closer to the airport to break up transport time from Swan River and restart the clock for the purposes of the Regulations. These horses endured a five to six hour drive from Swan River to the interim feedlot, arriving between 10:30 - 11:45 pm on February 22, 2024. This is contrary to the equine industry's own Codes of Practice which

suggest that horses are not to be unloaded at unfamiliar fenced-in locations in the dark. The next day, they were shipped to Japan.

CFIA records indicate that all 99 horses arrived in Japan in “Good” condition with no animals seriously injured or killed. The “airport onboard inspection findings” in the Japanese records indicate that the exporter’s attendant reported that all horses were standing during the flight and onboard inspection. However, the next sentence in the document appears to contradict this claim, stating: “all horses, including the fallen ones, showed good vitality.”

Japanese handwritten quarantine records indicate that 15 horses in this shipment exhibited elevated HCT levels or WBC counts, indicative of severe physiological stress, often caused by serious infection or inflammation. Horses also suffered from the following illnesses and injuries:

- One horse was bleeding from the mouth, and another had a wound on the lower lip.
- One horse’s back right leg was injured and bleeding.
- One horse could not stand up for several days and had stiff legs.
- One horse had eye discharge and a swollen eye. Swollen eyes in horses are often caused by physical trauma (e.g. being kicked) or infections like conjunctivitis.⁵⁰
- Three horses had diarrhea.
- Two horses had scrapes (one on the back leg, one on the right eyelid).

⁵⁰ See:

<https://www.msdevetmanual.com/horse-owners/eye-disorders-of-horses/disorders-of-the-conjunctiva-in-horses>; see also:
<https://horsesidevetguide.com/drv/Observation/467/swelling-around-one-eye-or-eyelid/>

- One horse had a swollen knee/cannon.
- One horse had purulent nasal discharge. As noted above, purulent nasal discharge in horses is generally a sign of infectious, severe inflammation, or other medical problems.
- One horse was blind in the right eye and had a coronet injury that was bleeding.

11) March 10, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.87 hours

Injuries/illnesses: 6 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 2 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 1 horse with bleeding/lacerations; 1 horse unable to stand or move back legs; multiple horses with diarrhea

CFIA records indicated that all horses arrived safely in Japan, and that all were in good health.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records indicate that over 15 horses suffered injuries and illnesses:

- One horse had a wound on the back of the coronet.
- One horse had a swollen fetlock on the back right leg and was in noticeable pain.
- One horse's front left leg was swollen.
- One horse had a swollen, deformed hoof, and a swollen front right fetlock with the same leg "bent towards the middle".
- One horse had a wound on the face.

- One horse was avoiding weight application on the back left leg.
- One horse had lacerated lips that were bleeding.
- One horse was limping on their front left leg.
- One horse was down, breathing fast, and when approached, would move their front legs but not their back legs and did not stand up.
- Several horses had diarrhea (the exact number was not recorded).

12) March 17, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 27.07 hours

Deaths: 1 horse euthanized due to a broken leg sustained during transport

Injuries/Illness: 4 horses with fevers

The exporter reported to the CFIA that no horses were injured or killed during this flight. Yet shortly after landing in Japan, Japanese records show that one horse had an open fracture of the left tibia, leaving the animal unable to stand. The horse was then euthanized.

Two other horses were also reported as ill with fevers during the quarantine period. The first horse's fever was at a near fatal temperature, reaching a height of 40.9 degrees Celsius. The fever lasted for seven days. There is no record of what the temperature of the other horse was or any further information regarding their condition. Both horses were administered "Sulpyrine" for fever relief, and one horse was also given "Intagen", both Japanese products. As noted above, horses

frequently develop a fever after lengthy transport, often due to stress, dehydration, and restricted movement.⁵¹

Handwritten Japanese quarantine records note that at least two additional horses were ill with a fever, however, these records were particularly difficult to decipher due to the extremely low resolution of the documents, so the extent of additional illnesses and injuries in horses in this shipment is unknown.

13) April 14, 2025

Shipment details: 99 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (stopover)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 28.92 hours

Injuries/Illness: 6 horses collapsed during flight; 1 horse fell during loading in Edmonton and was prodded with sticks; 5 horses with body/hoof/leg injuries; 1 horse with eye/face/nasal injuries; 2 horses with fever; 1 horse with bleeding/lacerations

According to CFIA records, a three-year-old horse fell down inside one of the crates during loading at the Edmonton airport and showed visible signs of distress. Instead of providing care to the distressed horse, staff prodded him with sticks and poured water on him for over half an hour. A staff member even sought permission to use an electric prod on the horse to force him to stand. Animal Justice and the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition reported this incident to the CFIA and the

⁵¹ See, e.g. [https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/111209/managing-and-preventing-transport-associated-fever#:~:text=Additionally%2C%20traveling%20horses%20commonly%20become,lung%20and%20the%20pleural%20cavity\).](https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/111209/managing-and-preventing-transport-associated-fever#:~:text=Additionally%2C%20traveling%20horses%20commonly%20become,lung%20and%20the%20pleural%20cavity).)

Alberta SPCA, yet it does not appear that any enforcement action was taken against those involved.⁵²

After nearly an hour of trying to force the distressed horse to stand, the decision was finally made to send him and two other horses in the same crate back to the feedlot. The remaining horses in this shipment were forced to endure transport without food, water, and rest for more than the legal limit of 28 hours. Based on the exporter's own numbers, the animals were in transport without food, water, and rest for at least 29 hours.

CFIA records reveal that another horse collapsed on the flight to Japan. The horse was apparently left to suffer on board for nearly two hours. The attendant reported that the horse did not "seem to be seriously injured" but no other notes were made about the horse's condition.

CFIA records suggest that four horses went down upon landing in Japan when the pilot hit the brakes "extremely hard", though Japanese records suggest that the number of horses who fell during landing was five, with a total of six horses down in their crates when the plane landed in Japan.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records reveal additional injuries and illnesses among the horses, including the following:

- At least two horses were ill with fevers.
- Four horses had wounds on their bodies, including wounds on the front right cannon and above the left eye.

⁵² See:

<https://animaljustice.ca/blog/animal-justice-files-legal-complaint-over-horse-in-distress-live-export>

- One horse was bleeding from the nose.
- One horse had a swollen leg.
- One horse was avoiding applying weight on their leg, and their fetlock was unstable.

In addition, Japanese records suggest that one horse would not eat. As noted above, reduced appetite is common in horses following long transport, generally caused by stress, dehydration, fatigue, and/or gastric health problems.

14) May 11, 2025

Shipment details: 93 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 24.68 hours

Deaths: 1 horse died due to cervical phlegmon and pneumonia

Injuries/illness: 2 horses fell during landing; 15 horses with body/hoof/leg/injuries; 7 horses with diarrhea; 4 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 4 horses with nasal discharge; 2 horses with bleeding/lacerations; 1 horse with nictitating membrane protruding from eye

CFIA records indicate that two horses were knocked down upon landing in Japan, and Japanese records confirm this. However, there is no further information about the condition of these two horses, or whether they sustained injuries during their fall, apart from an indication that they were ultimately able to stand up.

Government of Japan data reveals that one horse died due to cervical phlegmon and pneumonia. As noted above, pneumonia is a known risk in horses transported for long durations (known as shipping fever). The horse had a serious fever that

lasted three days, collapsing and dying on the third day with a 40.7 degree Celsius fever. Cervical phlegmon is a severe, rapidly spreading bacterial infection of the deep subcutaneous or connective tissues in the neck. It is characterized by intense inflammation, heat, pain, and, if not treated quickly, can lead to abscess formation and tissue necrosis. Causes include non-sterile injections, penetrating injuries, or bacterial spread including caused by Strangles.⁵³ There is no mention in the records of the horse receiving any medical treatment, including pain relief. This death is not reflected in the CFIA's records.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records reveal additional injuries and illnesses among the horses, including the following:

- One horse's hoof came off. One common cause of this severe condition is laminitis—a painful inflammation of the sensitive tissues connecting the hoof wall to the coffin bone.⁵⁴ Long-distance transport is known to cause laminitis in horses due to severe stress, dehydration, and prolonged confinement.⁵⁵ Other causes of a horse's hoof coming off include acute trauma (e.g., being stepped on or getting their leg caught).⁵⁶
- At least two additional horses had a fever.
- One horse's eye/eyelid was scraped.
- One horse's front right knee was scraped and bleeding.

⁵³ See, e.g. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1120736/>; <https://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics/strangles>.

⁵⁴ See: <https://www.msdevetmanual.com/musculoskeletal-system/disorders-of-the-foot-in-horses/laminitis-in-horses>

⁵⁵ See <https://equimanagement.com/research-medical/transport-impacts-on-horse-health-and-injury/>; see also: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0162371>

⁵⁶ See: <https://madbarn.ca/hoof-degloving-in-horses/>

- Eight horses had wounds on their torso, face, or legs/coronet.
- One horse has a wound on the nose and diarrhea.
- One horse was bleeding.
- One horse had a wound on the leg/coronet and purulent nasal discharge.
- Six horses experienced diarrhea.
- Two horses had nasal discharge, one noted as purulent and one noted as yellow.
- Five horses had cracked hoofs.
- One horse had a cracked hoof and eye discharge.
- One horse had eye discharge.
- One horse had a nictitating membrane (third eyelid) protruding from the eye—a condition that is often a sign of eye pain or severe dehydration.

Furthermore, seven horses exhibited elevated HCT levels and/or WBC counts, indicating severe stress, and often associated with serious infection or inflammation.

15) June 9, 2025

Shipment details: 132 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 26.33 hours

Injuries/illnesses: 8 horses with nasal discharge; 3 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 1 horse with bleeding/lacerations; 1 horse with protruding nictitating membrane

CFIA records suggest that there were no incidents during this shipment, and do not contain any data on the condition of the horses during quarantine. Government of

Japan records indicate that aircraft inspection after landing was skipped by the livestock quarantine officer because there were “no abnormalities” reported on the export quarantine certificate or in the information provided by the captain concerning the conditions during transportation.

Japanese handwritten records from quarantine indicate the following illnesses and injuries:

- One horse was bleeding in her mouth.
- Two horses had swelling on their legs (one swollen fetlock and one swollen coronary band).
- One horse had a laceration on the right eyeball or possibly an inflammation and protrusion of the nictitating membrane. As noted above, this is commonly a sign of significant eye pain or severe dehydration.
- One horse had a leg contusion on her front left leg/fetlock.
- Eight horses had nasal discharge, including purulent discharge indicative of infection/illness.
- One horse reportedly vomited after eating. Because horses are not physically capable of vomiting, feed or fluid coming from their nose or mouth after eating is usually indicative of a serious medical emergency such as gastric reflux from colic.⁵⁷ As noted above, colic in horses is caused by a range of factors including severe dehydration, stress, and/or long periods without food.

⁵⁷ See:

<https://equineinstitute.org/blogs/horse-care-tips/can-horses-throw-up-understanding-equine-digestive-health?srltid=AfmBOopCV2FYmfAJLeijuffcrF7btHEZhacUCEoZtzo-h5KwwtpTBbyK>

16) June 17, 2025

Shipment details: 86 horses (Winnipeg to Kagoshima) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 24.18 hours. Note that this calculation does not include the 6.5 hours that the horses were in transport the night before (on June 15) when they were transported from the feedlot in Swan River to the interim feedlot closer to the Winnipeg airport. The horses arrived at the interim feedlot after midnight on June 16.

Injuries/illnesses: 4 horses with diarrhea; 3 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 3 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 1 with critically high fever

CFIA records suggest that there were no incidents during this shipment, despite noted turbulence during the flight. However, there is a note in the records that the floor of one of the crates was damaged. CFIA documents do not contain any data on the condition of the horses during quarantine.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records reveal several horses suffered injuries and illness:

- One horse had a critically high fever of 40.3 degrees Celsius and was limping on their front left leg.
- One horse had an injured front left leg.
- One horse had discharge from the left eye.
- One horse had diarrhea and discharge from the left eye.
- One horse has a wound above the left eye.
- One horse had a wound on the back right leg.
- Three horses had diarrhea.

17) June 23, 2025

Shipment details: 78 horses (Edmonton to Kitakyushu) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 27.92-28.92 hours. The exporter's records suggest that this shipment made it 5 minutes under the 28-hour legal limit, with a total duration of 27.92 hours. They reported that horses were unloaded at quarantine 3.5 hours after landing in Japan—approximately one hour quicker than the process is known to take at that airport. This raises doubts as to whether this shipment was in compliance with the 28-hour legal limit.

Deaths: 1 horse was euthanized due to joint dislocation and tendon damage after collapsing on flight

Injuries/illnesses: 6 horses with body/hoof/leg injuries; 3 horses with eye/face/nasal injuries; 3 horses with fever

According to CFIA records, one horse was down approximately eight hours into the 11-hour flight from Edmonton to Kitakyushu. The attendant attempted to use a "livestock stick"—an instrument generally made from aluminum or carbon fiber, featuring a hook or blunt tip—to try to force the horse to stand. However, one of the other horses in the crate became "agitated". The attendant decided to leave the horse, indicating that they would monitor the downed horse. However, CFIA records reveal that the attendant could not recall what colour the horse was or which crate the horse was in. The horse was still down upon arrival in Japan. The attendant reported that the downed horse was not seriously injured. They reported to the CFIA that there were "zero" injuries during the flight.

Later, the CFIA received a report from Japanese authorities that one horse had a fractured hind leg upon arrival and was placed in isolation as a result. CFIA emails indicate that they inquired with the exporter regarding the discrepancy between reports from the exporter and Japanese authorities, but there is no indication that any enforcement action was taken.

The injured horse could not place any weight on their leg, and Japanese records report that there was “a lot of hemorrhage”. On the second day of quarantine, the injured horse was *“euthanized due to a poor prognosis resulting from an open dislocation of the pastern joint and a tear of the superficial digital flexor tendon”*. There is no record of this horse receiving any pain relief medication for a condition that would have likely caused extreme pain and suffering. This death is not reflected in the CFIA's records.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records also indicate that numerous other horses were injured or ill:

- Three horses had fevers.
- Two horses had wounds and/or scabs on the upper eye/eyelid area.
- One horse had wounds on the face.
- One horse had a swollen neck.
- Two horses had pus discharge from one or both hoofs, indicating a hoof abscess—a painful condition that requires prompt treatment to prevent suffering and the onset of sudden, severe lameness.⁵⁸
- One horse had a swollen front left fetlock.

⁵⁸ See:

<https://madbarn.ca/hoof-abscess/?srsId=AfmBOorvjpmYsdWhcspKs7iAvr0xyM0y1uSQeEWZRz-BL6xpSaE9Finu>

- One horse's hoof came off. As noted above, this is a rare and serious condition generally caused by physical trauma (e.g. being stepped on) or laminitis—a condition known to be caused by long-distance transport.
- One horse had a cracked hoof.

18) July 7, 2025

Shipment details: 111 horses (Edmonton to Kansai) (direct)

Duration without food, water, and rest: 23.78 - 24.12 hours (discrepancy between CFIA and Japanese records)

Injuries/illnesses: 4 horses with hoof/leg/fetlock injuries; 6 horses with bleeding/lacerations

CFIA records suggest that there were no injuries during this shipment and do not contain any data on the condition of the horses during quarantine. According to Japanese records, the aircraft onboard inspection was skipped, so there is no data regarding the condition of the horses onboard the plane or at the time of landing.

Japanese handwritten quarantine records for this shipment are particularly difficult to decipher so the extent of injuries and illnesses observed during quarantine are unknown. However, based on the readable portions of the records, numerous horses were injured and/or ill:

- Four horses had lacerations on their legs (coronary band area).
- Two horses had lacerations on their legs and were limping.
- One horse was limping and breathing fast.
- One horse's front left leg was swollen and unable to bear weight.

Additionally, Japanese records noted that the stables the horses were housed in reached temperatures of 33.4 degree Celsius, often paired with humidity as high as 91 percent. Multiple horses showed clear signs of heat stress, including lying on their sides and exhibiting rapid breathing for days on end, with many also suffering from other injuries.

III. Additional Deaths and Injuries During Shipments

There were several shipments of horses from September 2024 – September 2025 for which Government of Japan data has not been made available. Because the full scope of injuries, illnesses, and deaths in horses included in these shipments is therefore unknown, these flights are not included in the detailed analysis above. Nonetheless, even based on incomplete CFIA data there were numerous shocking incidents in these additional shipments, including two deaths. For instance:

- 1) October 21, 2024 (one collapsed horse):** During this shipment of 106 horses from Edmonton to Kitakyushu, at least one horse collapsed during the flight. The attendant was unable to get the horse to stand, so he remained down for approximately three hours, putting him at significant risk of injury from being stepped on by other horses confined in the same crate. CFIA records contain no further information on the horse's condition after landing.

- 2) November 18, 2024 (two deaths):** At least two horses died of transport-related illnesses following this shipment of 99 horses from Edmonton to Kitakyushu. CFIA records indicate that "all horses arrived in

good condition” and that this was a “great flight”. However, Japanese records later provided to the CFIA show that two horses died during quarantine in the days after arrival in Japan from “intestinal torsion and transport stress”. Both horses were found to be severely dehydrated. One of the horses had an extremely high fever of 40.0 degrees Celsius on the first day of quarantine, dying four days later. The second horse’s fever was observed on the second day of quarantine, and the horse died several days later after showing signs of lethargy as well as bloody nasal discharge.

Intestinal torsion in horses is a life-threatening form of colic where the gut twists, cutting off blood supply and causing tissue death.⁵⁹ It causes severe pain, causing some horses to roll repeatedly, thrash their bodies, or kick at their abdomen. The condition requires immediate veterinary attention, and is generally treated through surgery. Long distance transport without food, water, and rest is a known risk factor for the development of intestinal torsion, due to extreme dehydration; stress reducing normal gut motility, causing gas build-up; prolonged fasting followed by sudden feeding causing excessive gas production; and/or stress hormones altering blood flow and gut function.⁶⁰

3) March 3, 2025 (one horse collapsed): According to the exporter’s reporting to the CFIA, this shipment from Edmonton to Kitakyushu was five minutes under the 28-hour legal limit for transport without food, water, and rest, and

⁵⁹ See:

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/horse-owners/digestive-disorders-of-horses/gastrointestinal-obstruction-blockages-in-horses>

⁶⁰ See: <https://gmpe-akademie.de/articles/gjvr/single/144>; see also <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12401009/>

one horse collapsed during the flight and was down in their crate for several hours. This would have put the animal at a high risk of being injured by other horses stepping on them. As with virtually all other collapsed horses during these shipments, the exporter reported that the fallen horse was not injured and that they “expected” that the horse “got up” in Japan. With no records from Japan there is no further data about the status of this horse or any other horses involved in this shipment.

4) June 2, 2025 (two horses collapsed): At least two horses collapsed according to CFIA records alone. One horse collapsed during the flight, and was down for between three and a half to five and a half hours. The horse was still down upon landing. A second horse fell down during landing. The attendant reported “no irregularity” upon arrival, describing the two collapsed horses as “not seriously injured”. No further information about these horses, or the health status of other horses during the quarantine period in Japan, is available.

5) September 7, 2025 (three horses collapsed): CFIA records suggest that three horses went down during landing but were “able to get up”. The CFIA timeline document indicates simply that all horses arrived “safely” with no injuries. No further information exists about the health status of these horses or others in the shipment.

6) September 15, 2025 (three horses collapsed): At least three horses collapsed during this flight. The exporter reported to the CFIA that there were no injuries during the flight. Yet the exporter’s own records indicate that one

of the downed horses was unable to stand during unloading at the airport in Kitakyushu. The downed horse was “towed and moved in a non-ambulatory manner” to the quarantine facility. The exporter reported that this horse was able to stand once they arrived at quarantine.

Except for a brief note that the horse was towed on “litters and grass mats”, it is unclear exactly how the non-ambulatory horse was moved out of the wooden crate and into the transport truck. During previous shipments, horses unable to stand upon landing have been towed and lifted via forklift—an inhumane way to move any distressed and compromised animal. Because no Government of Japan records are available for this shipment, it is unclear whether this horse survived. There is no information about the condition of these horses during the quarantine period.

Report authored by Animal Justice. CFIA records provided by the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition. Government of Japan records provided by Life Investigation Agency