



Guilty Verdict returned in Chicago carriage horse trial

The Horse.com - 9-28-09

by: Lisa Kemp - September 28 2009 - Two of three Chicago carriage horse drivers were convicted on misdemeanor counts of animal neglect on Wednesday, Sept. 23. Michele Goudie, manager and co-owner of J.C. Cutters Ltd., and carriage driver Melissa Woicek received guilty verdicts on six and one counts respectively; a third defendant, Frances Dupont, was acquitted. Defense attorney John Robeznieks said, "At the end of the day, although they were convicted, they received the least possible punishment the judge could issue, which was supervision for 12 months, after which the conviction will be expunged from their records." A temporary restraining order has kept the seized carriage horses at the Hooved Animal Humane Society (HAHS) in Woodstock, Ill. Jody Bielke, legal counsel for HAHS, indicated they would move forward against the temporary restraining order following Wednesday's decision. "Based on the findings in the criminal court, the Hooved Animal Humane Society will now pursue its legal recourse to dissolve the temporary restraining order preventing them from adopting out the horses and to collect all expenses related to the board and care of the horses to date," said Bielke. An appeal on the criminal charges is still possible, and an ongoing civil case based on improper seizure procedures by the City of Chicago is still in process, according to Robeznieks. "Misdemeanor cases are rarely appealed, but this is an important issue. These ladies love their horses and don't feel they did anything wrong in terms of caring for them."