



**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: Coroner Judgement of Inquiry and Inquest
Inquisition and Recommendations**

Department of Justice, Legal Services
Yukon Coroners Service
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Yukon Coroners Service: Judgement of Inquiry into the death of: Arnold Johnson

Coroner Investigative File No.: 45202013058

Name: Arnold Johnson Date of Birth: 1956/03/13 Date of Death: 2014/01/27
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: Lot 29 Takhini Subdivision, Whitehorse, Yukon
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: First Nations Location of Death: Whitehorse General Hospital

Cause of Death

Blunt Force Head Injury due to an Accident Involving a Horse

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

Postmortem examination was performed at Vancouver General Hospital on January 30, 2014 at 09:00hrs. The autopsy confirmed lethal blunt force head injury with multifocal scalp bruising and fracturing to the rear part of the skull. The neuropathology report confirmed the presence of a hairline skull fracture approximately 11cm long and discrete fractures of the right supraorbital plate. There were brain lacerations and contusions, bilateral to the anterior frontal, orbitofrontal, and anterior temporal lobes of the brain. There was diffuse brain swelling and hemorrhagic infarctions noted.

Toxicological Findings

Toxicology testing of postmortem samples was deferred. Antemortem samples were seized and toxicology analysis was performed at the British Columbia Provincial Toxicology Centre. Toxicology analysis of the antemortem samples showed no alcohol or illicit drugs. There was a presence of lidocaine and ketamine which is consistent with medical intervention.

Circumstances of Death

Arnold Johnson was a generally healthy, 57 year old man of Whitehorse. On January 26, 2014, he was assisting a pound keeper handling feral horses which had been captured on a rural property north of the community of Whitehorse.

The pound keeper with Mr. Arnold's assistance, were attempting to move sex feral horses from a corral into a loading chute. This was so that the animals could be loaded into a stock trailer and transported to the Livestock Control Pound Facility. The band of feral horses that had been captured were frequenting the highway right of way on the North Alaska Highway. The practice of capturing feral horses is to address issue of livestock at large which are or may cause a public nuisance or safety concerns.

The horses spooked and an 800lb mare tried to jump a metal livestock gate. The mare got her legs tangled up in the gate and breaking the gate pins. The mare and the gate collapsed onto Mr. Johnson, knocking him down. Mr. Johnson struck his head on the frozen ground and was immediately unconscious. As a result, he sustained serious head injuries and was pronounced deceased on January 27, 2014 at Whitehorse General Hospital as a result of Blunt Force Head Trauma.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

There are small bands of feral horses in Yukon. These horses can pose a risk to public safety and private property. Feral horses in Yukon have no identified ownership. A pro-active approach to the risks posed by feral horses can include capturing the horses. The pound keeper is a contracted individual who facilitates the capture of feral horses.

Mr. Johnson agrees to assist the pound keeper to load six feral horses into a stock trailer on the morning of January 26, 2014.

The loading chute of the capture corral was constructed of both timber rustle fencing and metal pre-fabricated 5'x10' livestock fencing. Horses have been known to jump the metal livestock fencing in the past.

Mr. Johnson was standing behind the metal gate with limited options for escape or self-rescue.

Mr. Johnson was not wearing any personal protective equipment, specifically a helmet. A helmet would have mitigated the head injuries sustained by Mr. Johnson in this incident.

Recommendations

To Government of Yukon, Department of Energy, Mines & Resources, Agriculture Branch:

In order to mitigate the risk of serious head injury and death, persons providing services to Government of Yukon for the capture, corralling, and transport of feral horses should be required to wear a helmet when working in close proximity to the animals.


Signature, Chief Coroner

Whitehorse, Yukon

Province/Territory

Dec.5, 2014

Date

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