



Trailer safety

A few simple steps can ensure your horse's trailering experience is a good one.

By Jeannie Blancq Putney



Trailering your horse can be a very stressful experience, especially for first-timers. Therefore safety should always be top-of-mind. There are many things you can do for your horse and trailer to make sure the trip is safe, whether you're going across town or across the country.

Your horse

The best thing you can do for your horse ahead of time is to get him used to the trailer. If he's a youngster or a horse that hasn't been in a trailer in a while, reacquainting him with your rig is a good idea. Also, giving him a pleasant experience on or near the trailer that will be fresh in his mind will help.

You can outfit your horse with specific items to increase the safety of his trip:

- * Use shipping boots or wrap your horse's legs to protect him during travel.
- * Head bumpers are available for horses that tend to raise their heads during travel or while loading or unloading. They attach to the horse's halter and are usually made of thick foam, wool or leather.
- * Tail wraps can protect against rubbing during travel.
- * Keep a first aid kit stocked and handy.
- * Always carry extra water.
- * Pack an extra halter and lead rope. Many people use a halter with their horse's name on it when traveling in case of an accident and/or if the horse gets loose. Your cell phone number written or

engraved on the halter could also prove invaluable.

Your equipment

The working condition of your truck and trailer should be the top priority. No matter how often you tow a horse trailer, it's always important to go through the same checklist before each trip.

- * Check your brake lights, turn signals, and tire tread and pressure.
- * Visually check for any sharp edges that your horse could come in contact with while traveling.
- * Clean underneath your mats to prevent manure and urine from rotting and destroying the floorboards.
- * Clean out grain or hay to prevent rotting and critters.
- * Have your dealer or mechanic perform regular maintenance on your truck. Let them know that you tow a horse trailer so they're able to check the appropriate equipment.
- * Every six months you should hand-pack the bearings, inspect the brakes, lights, wiring, suspension parts, frame, floor, coupler, jack, door hinges and latches.

These simple steps will help ensure you and your Appaloosa arrive at your destination safely and on time.

Editor's note: Thanks to Erin Novelli of Cornerstone Farm for her help with this article.

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