

Horse Trailers & Floats

Building confidence is a vital part of getting your horse comfortable with riding in a trailer/float. The loading process is a “leap of faith” on his part and being patient, consistent and clear is necessary for success.



All of our confidence building projects will build that trust on his part. If he can walk over objects and under objects feeling safe and calm, you are half way there.



The fact that a horse will get into a trailer to be driven from one place to another is a testimonial to that horse's trust. We must honor such trust by making the trailer itself as safe as possible and by driving the horse around in a sane and aware fashion. Drive your rig with awareness of the animal trying to balance inside. Pull out and stop gradually; go slowly around turns and corners. A horse can become difficult to load and haul if every time he rides in a trailer he is miserable or terrified.



The floor of the trailer may well be the most important part. If the floor the horse stands on has any weaknesses, tragedy can result. I always take a strong pocketknife and jab it into the floor boards at several locations. If the knife slides easily into the wood, that floorboard is not safe (it is probably rotten). Any wood rot means the entire floor should be replaced. By cleaning out the trailer stalls after every trip and washing the floor, then drying it, we can make the floor last longer.

The next inspection point needs to be for any protuberances, sharp edges or gaps (that a hoof or head could get stuck within) that could cause bodily harm or panic. I

always look for wasp nests, spider webs and the like where a venomous creature might hide.

Hitches, balls and electrical connections should be working properly. Tires need to be inspected and tire pressure checked. A spare is a necessity and jacks/wheel chocks, lug nut wrenches, even flat fix should be handy. I carry extra halters and leads, first aid kits, water (in an Aquatainer), buckets, flashlights, lavender oil and Rescue Remedy.

The floor of the trailer needs rubber mats to provide traction for the horse. The movement of the towing vehicle and trailer is extreme for the standing equine and any slick surface is dangerous (I once linseed oiled the trailer floor boards to preserve them and the rubber mat slid out from under my mare!).

Ventilation in the trailer is essential for the horse's health, no matter what time of year. In winter, leg bandages and blankets can keep the horse warm. In summer, open every single vent there is!

There are many articles of protective clothing for the traveling horse. Tall horses can wear "head bumpers" which are cushioned helmets that protect the very vulnerable "poll" at the top of the equine head. Shipping boots or bandages protect the legs and "bell boots" protect the hoof and heels in case the horse steps on himself. Rubber hoof boots can add more traction and a bungee or "safety" tie to secure the horse by the halter is a practical method. Always tie horses with a quick release knot that can be untied with one swift tug.

Load and unload him in the trailer with awareness of his feelings and according to the type of rig. If he is tied in the stall of a "straight" load trailer, always untie him from the front before opening the rear door and butt guard to unload him.

When you have to back up your trailer, hold the bottom of the steering wheel and move your hand slowly in the direction you want the trailer to go. Back up very slowly, making corrections slowly. If the rig tries to jack knife, pull forward to straighten up and start over.

Hauling horses can be a "snap" if you think ahead, prepare and stay focused on safety.