
CHAPTER VII: Travel Safety

Becoming a competent all-round horseman requires many skills, including the safe conveyance of a horse in a trailer and the maintenance of the vehicle itself. One must pay attention to details, laws, regulations and use common sense.

Avoid traveling alone when pulling a trailer. There are many circumstances where an assistant can help avoid a dangerous situation. Consult with experienced horsemen for additional help.

Trailer Maintenance

Weekly Check (or each time you tow if less often than weekly):

- Oil, fluid levels, belts on tow vehicle.
- Hitch on tow vehicle for loose or cracked welds and bolts.
- Trailer for rust in receiver.
- Tow vehicle for loose ball.
- Both vehicles for loose or broken electrical connectors.
- Signal and brake lights on trailer.
- Functioning of trailer brakes (as you pull away, depress brake box lever and feel for equal brake drag)
- Safety chains and hooks and places they connect.
- Tire pressure on tow vehicle, trailer and spare tires.
- Tire changing equipment to fit trailer and vehicle tires.
- Dual tires – hit inside tire with hammer, hammer will bounce back if air pressure is okay.
- Interior for wasp and hornet nests – they can appear within a week!

Monthly Check:

- Clean and inspect your trailer (so it will be ready to go when you are)
- Clean inside and out with soap and water
- Wash and wax trailer exterior
- Check tires for cuts and uneven wear
- Check quick releases mechanisms and D rings where they attach to trailer
- Check floor mats; inspect and clean floors with mats removed
- Check lubrication of nose wheel, hitch assembly and tailgate mechanism (especially if stored outside)
- Check center partition, lubricate groove bolts and rump chain or bars for easy removal in an emergency
- Check surface rust and sharp edges that may be developing, touch up with paint and repair when needed.

Yearly Check:

- Inspection date, register in the appropriate month (if required)
- Insurance coverage
- Condition of springs, shackle hangers and bolts or rubber torsion axels (for cracks and excessive wear)
- Condition of all wiring, bulbs, lenses and reflectors
- All channel iron supporting the floor for rust or cracks
- The underside of the floor for dry rot by scraping and probing with a knife
- Tread and condition of tires, including the spare
- Ramps and hinge for sag or rust – oil hinges
- Tailgate and threads on screw-type clamps for wear, replace if beginning to strip
- Braking system, including shoes
- Wheel bearings (repack)
- Wood floor planks (seal with a wood preservative) (Aluminum floor trailer wash and sprinkle a box of baking soda under the mats to neutralize corrosive action of urine)
- Replace trailer break-away battery, if needed.

Travel/Trailer Equipment Checklist

(See Appendix I, pg 32)

APPENDIX I: Travel/Trailer Equipment Checklist

(Even for short trips)

- Tow vehicle registration form
- Insurance card
- Trailer registration with current inspection stamp
- Coggins test results and health papers, if required, for horses
- Tool Kit – including:
 - Sturdy knife to cut tie ropes in an emergency
 - Crowbar (essential in case of need to remove center divider quickly)
 - Screw driver, plier, hammer, wrench etc.
 - Extra bulbs or light modules for trailer lights
 - A small selection of fuses that fit tow vehicle (most vehicles with trailer towing packages have a separate fuse box under hood containing these fuses)
- Extra pin for hitch of tow vehicle
- Two flashlights with extra batteries (a self-standing light, e.g. Coleman lantern, can be very helpful during a breakdown)
- First Aid Kit – human and equine (see Horse Management Handbook for list)
- Small pail and sponge or cloth
- Extra cotton and leg wraps
- Jumper cables
- Spare tire and jack for tow vehicle and trailer (include a 2-foot piece of steel pipe that will slip over lug wrench to increase leverage Most tires are put on too tightly with an air wrench for the average person to loosen without the extra leverage from the pipe.)
- Two chocks or blocks to put behind front and back tires when parked
- Towing chain or tow strap
- Flares or emergency triangle markers– in case of breakdown (for road warning)
- Large container of fresh water – can be used for horses, first aid treatment or some car problems
- Longe line, extra lead line and halter, sheet or blanket
- One chain lead shank for each horse in the trailer carried in the tow vehicle for safe emergency unloading
- Broom, shovel, fork, rake, manure disposal bags (leave-parking areas clean)
- Hay and feed needed for trip
- Water and feed buckets, hay net (fastened so it won't swing around or drop too low) – with fresh hay for each trip
- Chains and hooks for putting up buckets and stall guard if staying overnight
- Assorted bunge cords and duct tape for securing moving cargo, doors etc.
- Small quantity of extra engine oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid and anti freeze.
- Maps, directions and phone number needed
- Cell phone or CB radio