

## Long Distance trailering- do's and don'ts

You don't need an RV or LQ trailer for long trips, but it might take a little more planning to make the night stops easier.

Before the trip, make sure you know your rig inside and out. If you are not mechanically inclined, have a professional walk with you around it to see what's normal. If you are concerned that you can't back up well, take yourself and your rig to an empty parking lot and practice, practice, practice! A competent set of extra eyes can help.

Now..... make your ride entry - then plan your trip.

Make sure your horse's Coggins test is up to date- done less than a year ago. Make an appointment with your vet for a health certificate. Most states require a certificate that is no older than 30 days but during disease outbreaks they will want it less than 2 weeks old.

If you can, try to do your first long trip with someone who's done it before- ask if you can tag along with them for the experience.

First real question is: Do you want to do this trip in one shot or break it up. Are you heading for an event or just moving states. Maybe you want to make it a mini vacation at the same time? If you're just changing states and have a co-driver, you can try to make the trip in one long haul with several stops to walk and water the horse. Don't do this if you have an event at the end because the horse will arrive dehydrated and stressed.

Planning the trip: Depending on how well your horse camps you can plan to spend the night at public rodeo grounds, fairgrounds, horse camps and boarding stables, or you can dry camp in an open lot somewhere. Arrange your trip to drive 500 to 600 miles each day and plan to stop and walk and water the horse at least once- 500 miles will take about 10 hrs- with fueling and walking.

Use Google Maps or Map Quest to not only plan the route but to figure out what town or city is in that driving distance. Once you know that, you can do several things. One is to ask friends (often using social media) what they know is in that area, or if anyone they know lives nearby and can accommodate me. Another is to search on-line for horse boarding, rodeo grounds or event arenas. And if your horse can trailer tie- look for large truck stops. Consider using Google Earth to get a satellite view of the locations to get an idea of the layout – looking for dirt lots etc

At the same time, try to plan the rest stop, looking for highway rest areas or dirt lots near truck stops to water and walk the horse. It really helps to have someone else along who can do some phone searches if the stop you planned didn't work out.

One other thing to consider, what are you driving- how are you camping? If you can't unhitch easily and are not cooking in your rig, make sure that food is within walking distance.

Now, once you have your trip planned, make sure someone else has that information in case of emergency.

## **Packing for the horse –**

For ease of transport, consider hay in compressed forms, like hay cubes or compressed 50-pound hay bales. - If you plan to camp with horses on public lands, realize that you must bring Certified Weed Free hay to reduce invasive plants in wilderness areas. I have the front stall of my trailer set up to manage 3 or 4 bales of hay. Consider installing a roof rack on your trailer or RV to store extra hay or gear

Pack any grain or supplements your horse uses and include extra in case you get stuck somewhere. There are products like Purina Replenimash or Equine Elixir's Chug to help encourage a horse's drinking while travelling. Beet pulp shreds work well too. Don't forget your electrolytes. And some salt to add to their food will encourage drinking.

Water- consider installing water storage tanks, corner shaped, square or saddle rack types are simple, roof rack tanks take more work. Plan to bring 10 more gallons in portable storage- easier to water the horse along the way. Some trailers don't have that water storage so pack as many portable jugs as you can fit. Horses can be picky drinkers and having their home water on the way helps. Consider having a small battery powered water pump to refill the tanks from hard to reach water.

At least two - 5 gallon buckets and a rubber feed tub for each horse.

Extra shavings, manure fork, muck bucket and a collapsable cart for moving it, along with large garbage bags. Bed the trailer deep with shavings to cushion the ride and clean out at least the wet stuff when you stop to water/walk.

Extra tack in case something breaks – girth, cinch, bridle etc.

A well-stocked first aid kit that should include banamine and dorm gel tranquilizer if you can. You might not find a vet on the road in time.

Pack several different weights of blankets, fleeces and sheets for each horse – especially in the winter. You might meet weather that you didn't expect.

If you are going somewhere there is a chance of rain, consider packing an EZ up type shelter -or 2 even.

## **For the truck and trailer:**

Make sure your propane is full if you have an RV or LQ. Is the trip going to be long enough to need a dump station? Do you have those hoses as well?

If you are travelling to hot or extremely cold areas, get your trailer insulated. It's not hard to do yourself either.

Consider mounting a portable camera in your trailer- it can help if there is a problem with a nervous horse.

Pack:

Fire extinguisher, very important

A spare- At least one for carry two for the trailer while on the road. A portable jack or drive on ramp jack for the trailer is very helpful along with tire changing tools – including a large pipe to help break lug nuts loose. A battery powered impact wrench is not expensive and makes changing tires so much faster! A portable tire air filler is nice; - don't forget a tire gauge.

Thick gloves for handling a blown-out tire

Tool kit with wrenches, hammer, pliers, duct tape etc, WD 40 spray. You never know.

Water hose and spray nozzle

Bungee cords and hay string, they can fix what duct tape doesn't 😊

Blocks of wood in case you have to unhitch to hold the trailer jack or block the wheels.

Disinfectant! Bring some concentrate and a spray bottle with a scrubber or sponge

### **Packing for the person.**

How are you camping, RV? Bed of the truck or trailer? Motel?

I'm assuming you know what clothes you want, don't forget your bedding. Bring extra of both.

First aid kit, including pain killers and antihistamine.

Even if you're planning to eat at restaurants or fast food, pack some emergency food and water. If you take prescription medications, pack extra.

### **The trip itself**

Walk. Your. Rig.

Every single time you stop. Walk. Your. Rig. Look for low tires, cracked/busted welds, door/window hinges, lug nuts, secured latches, quick visual of the hitch (lost my plug a few times) , head gates/drops (those aluminum bars can break) and whatever else is in between. Don't forget to look under it occasionally as well! There's so much under there that can break too!

Make this second nature and you can potentially save yourself a lot of headaches later.

Have your trailer professionally inspected at least once a year.

There are companies that are like Triple A for horse people. I really like US Rider, they have a lot of features they offer and help get horses and equipment safe. Do this ahead of time, don't wait until you have an issue.

Know your maintenance schedule. Can't recall the last time you had your bearings/brakes/tires inspected? Then it's time. Over a year? Then it's time. Have a blow out? Then it's time. Tires over 4 years old but still have lots of tread? It's time for new ones.

## Hitting the road

Don't hard tie your horse, they need to be able to lower their heads to stay healthy and in an emergency you might need to unload quickly.

Keeping hay bags full is important too. Smaller hole slow feed bags are great but not completely necessary, you want to keep stomach acid at bay and horses content while traveling. I don't like feeding grain during travel but will make a wet mush on rest stops if my horse isn't drinking.

Plan to drive about 4 to 5 hrs and stop to walk and water your horse, if I have someone along to help, try to combine a refueling stop with the horse break- you fuel and they walk.

When you arrive for the evening: if you are stopping at an event grounds or boarding stable, walk the pen to make sure it's clean and safe. If it looks recently used, whip out your disinfectant spray and clean the walls or pipes. This is one of the reasons that I might be safer to trailer tie the horse in a dirt lot somewhere- no cooties.

Feed and water your horse of course and settle in for the night. If the horse is not tied to my trailer it's nice to park near them to keep an ear on them at night.

Last question. How can you pay for this? Ask if there might be someone else going who wants to share a ride. Post your planned route on social media and see if someone needs a horse or other animal moved along that route? I've hauled dogs, sheep and goats, as well as other horses. Or talk your family into making it a vacation trip so your vacation funds cover it? There are a few apps and fuel companies who offer big discounts with membership.

Then you can really relax when you get to the ride!

