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Hauling horses hither, thither and yon has become quite a pastime for many whether it is for fun trail rides, serious competition, or breeding purposes. In fact, it has become so commonplace, that many forget some of the inherent challenges such an endeavor presents.

Equipment

As for all projects, proper equipment is essential. "Proper" does not necessarily mean expensive, but it does mean safe.

Professional hauler—it is best to ask around to locate names of haulers that others have been pleased with; there are some that specialize in relatively local hauls and others who specialize in long-distance hauling. Ask about timing; how they handle, rest, feed and water the horses; how far in advance you need to reserve space, the size of the van they will be using to make sure it can easily navigate both to and on your horse facility, etc. Whichever kind of hauling you need, inspect the vans themselves, making sure they appear safe and with plenty of ventilation. Some owners want air conditioning in the summer, but this can have a deleterious effect on the horse coming out of a cool van and into stifling heat. Far better to go with fresh air and circulating fans.

Talk with the drivers/grooms if you can. These are the people who will actually be handling your horse; some are true horsepeople while others seem to be marginal in their horse-handling abilities. Check with the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed against them. One national hauler we, and many others, have been very pleased with is Nationwide based in Colorado Springs, Colorado; www.nwht.net (719) 392-1888. Others we have heard good comments about include: All State Horse Express, CO www.allstatehorseexpress.com (800) 451-7696; Bob Hubbard Horse Transport (had exclusive contract to haul the horses for the XXIII Olympics), WA www.equiresource.com/commercial/cmrcelhub.htm (800) 472-7786 and Country Girls Horse Hauling, OR (800)-697-1494.

Most people prefer to manage short, fun hauls themselves and certainly those who campaign heavily get their own appropriate rigs.

Trailer—make sure that all trailers are roadworthy before you take off for your big adventure or if you are buying a used one. No matter what make, model or size, it should have good suspension with shock absorbent flooring. It is wise to check not only floorboards, tires, brakes, turn signals and hitch attachments, but also for protuberances that can injure a horse. One of our fillies was sold for a working mounted sheriff's posse horse. When her owner purchased a "new" used trailer a few years later, he forgot to check the lever on the escape hatch upon which she promptly impaled herself taking out a hunk of chest/shoulder the size of a 5# roast. And she was a veteran traveler by that time. In spite of almost dying from blood loss, she got better with time and very special **DYNAMITE®** treatment after the vets had essentially given her up for lost, but that is not something anyone really wants to go through.

Essentially there are two types of trailers: pull-behind which attach to the axle *not* the bumper and goose-neck which fit into a socket in the bed of a truck. We have used only pull-behinds because we do only relatively infrequent, short hauls. In fact, the trailer is probably used more for hauling anything *but* horses! For those who are going to haul more frequent and longer trips, the gooseneck is probably safer and easier to use. All modern trailers come with some sort of feed and tack storage and, in

addition, can come with living quarters. We have seen many people spend very large sums of money on trailers far beyond their needs and then have none left over for a really good horse or even appropriate feed. We suggest purchasing only what your budget can easily afford since you can upgrade at a later date if your current one eventually proves insufficient.

About twenty years ago, we were fortunate to find an over-tall, over-wide pull-behind stock trailer (for under \$3000) that we immediately snapped up after our old one gave up the ghost; in fact, we still own and use it. The larger size is more acceptable to a horse's sensibilities than the still common little dark boxes. The open slats on the upper third provide plenty of light and ventilation which both help the horse accept that sort of close confinement and which are healthier respiration-wise. Horses can produce much heat and moisture, which, in a closed environment, can raise the interior temperature to unacceptable and unhealthy levels; proper ventilation, and plenty of it, is essential.

We always leave horses untied so they can travel in whatever direction they choose; most turn themselves around and ride backwards although some prefer to continue to face forward. Research from Australia has long shown that allowing the horse freedom to lower its head and neck enables the respiratory tract to be cleaned of dust and mucous which significantly delays the onset of respiratory diseases. Leaving them untied also alleviates the fear of either getting a leg caught in a rope or, worse yet, falling and breaking a neck because they are tied. Also be aware of slats that could catch a leg, or too-low dividers that will actually encourage a horse to attempt to climb over. The roomy new, three and four horse slants, if meeting all other requirements, also seem to be very acceptable to most horses.

Many owners put shipping boots (we recommend Old Mac) on during transportation to aid in footing. To save a rearing horse's head, helmets are also becoming very popular. While many individuals like to wrap horses legs for hauling, it is our belief that this interferes with the legs' natural ability to regulate blood and lymph flow. Far better is to allow the horse to walk around a bit a couple of times a day at least during long hauls.

Vehicle—make sure your vehicle is suitable for hauling the weight of the trailer you have or are getting, and that it, too, is in tip-top condition. Surprisingly, many individuals forget to check if the tow weight of both trailer and vehicle match. If you are unsure of the weight your truck can haul, check with a knowledgeable dealer or your trailer dealer if you are purchasing a new trailer. Our old, stripped down ¾ ton GMC pickup was totally sufficient for our needs although some individuals have found with large, heavy goose-necks, they need to upgrade to "duellies" and diesel engines. Again, it all depends on need (not necessarily want) and budget allowances. Utilizing **ZF-100** in your engine can greatly decrease emissions and increase gas mileage and power, especially useful when hauling.

Driver—familiarity with driving hitched to a trailer is definitely a plus, so practice in large empty parking lots before trying to drive on the road. Do remember, however, that horses are living creatures and not just loads of hay or dump trash. An Italian research team has determined that maintaining balance while driving is one of the more stressful aspects of hauling for horses with braking and cornering being singled out as the major causes of upset, both literally and figuratively. As the horse attempts to balance itself in the trailer, such movement can actually cause the tow vehicle to move in unexpected ways so awareness, caution and rea-

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sonable speeds are definitely in order when hauling horses.

Loading

Now that you are ready with your necessary equipment, the next question is getting the horse into the trailer. Shippers and researchers alike all agree that the time of greatest stress for horses is during loading and point out that proper training is essential rather than waiting for the van to arrive and hope for the best. Novice horses tend to believe that trailers are caves harboring life-threatening predators, and it is our responsibility as owners, to patiently assure them that this is untrue. There are many videos and trainers around now who can work with you and your horse in a non-threatening manner so that it hops easily, even joyfully, into your trailer. We ourselves have had terrific success over the years with our old, slow method in which the horse essentially trains itself.

Ever since we started with horses forty years ago, we built feeding stalls narrow and with a lip they had to step up and over to get to their concentrates; there was a feeding aisle to the front of stalls for separate human access. This allowed the horses to not only swing their butts just a bit from side to side denying access to the first finished in a pasture situation, but it also started the process of associating close confinement with something good rather than their ancient cellular memory of something bad like a cave containing a deadly bear or such. We also had a separate corral in which we parked the little old 2-horse trailer we had back then. A horse needing to learn to trailer was then kept in the corral and fed in the trailer (starting at the back and gradually moving the feed forward) which was initially backed up to an earthen ramp. Once the horse got the feel of the trailer and loaded itself willingly at least twice a day, we started lowering the height of the ramp until the horse just hopped in and out. We continue to park our "new" trailer in a corral but now we have a wooden ramp which also teaches them, automatically, about walking on bridges.

One colt we had was super sensitive and we figured he would really take quite a while to accept this strange, new feeding device. Not so! Within a week, he had devised a game whereby he raced up the ramp and into the trailer, stomped around mightily causing the whole thing to rock and roll with a terrible din. Then he'd turn around, race out, gallop around the corral kicking and bucking and repeat the whole procedure over and over again, much to the dismay of our ears! He had turned it into a favored play object.

A young nonchalant filly taught herself in about 1½ hours and that was it; all over, no problems. When we had sucklings that would go to their new homes as weanlings, we put the trailer into the broodmare's paddock early on and both would just climb in; learning from mom really paid off.

Stress

Regardless of how easily your horse loads into the trailer, hauling is considered a very stressful activity at best. Many competitors have learned to give **Relax** or **Tranquil** in the morning grain ration along with **DynaPro** and **Easy Boy**. For long hauls, many owners have found it advantageous to mix the ingredients into a slurry and either syringe it into the horse's mouth every few hours or so depending on the horse, or simply give at lunch and dinner stops along the way. During these stops, Japanese researchers have found that a simple cleaning of the box is also extremely beneficial to the well-being of the horse by reducing air contamination and thus the possibility of air-borne microbes.

Veteran competitors also are aware that strange water in new places can cause the horse to not drink adequate amounts resulting in some degree, perhaps serious, of dehydration. A little

drizzle of **DynaSpark** on the grain ration encourages both eating and drinking besides adding electrolyte balancing. During hot summer competition, the drizzle can be increased to 1-2 oz. each time. Another trick is to put a bit of **Super ACV** into the drinking water always, including while on the road. The smell and taste will overpower other and strange odors and tastes so that it seems just like home water. Additionally, the **ACV** will aid digestion.

Stress itself can cause an immune system overload opening the door to disease states, let alone the fact that horses may come from all over including from barns that may not be as picky about healthful practices as you are. Many **DYNAMITE®** competitors choose to give their horses rounds of either **Super-Stress** or **Hiscorbadyne** plus **SOD** before, during and after hauling and events.

To relieve the stress of uncertainty connected with minor injuries and wounds, carry with you our recommended "Critical Care Kit" consisting of **Release, Relax, Tranquil, Wound Balm, Wound Salve, Trace Minerals Concentrate, Tea Tree Oil, Solace** and **Vitality**. You'll be glad you have it!

Paperwork

When traveling, it is wise to carry, in addition to your normal registration and insurance information, duplicates of ownership papers at the very least. Many states, Colorado is one, require a brand inspection for any trip over 60 miles. Fortunately they also offer, for a relatively minor fee, permanent "papers" for frequent travelers. Some individuals keep these in their vehicles at all times just so they do not forget to have them on hand at inspection stops such as Ports of Entry.

As far as health certificates go, it is best to check locally and wherever your destination is to see what might be necessary. Here in Colorado, a health certificate is only necessary when leaving the state. During times of various disease outbreaks, obviously normal requirements may be adjusted. In Europe, beginning in 2004, all *equids* (horses, ponies, donkeys, mules, zebras, etc.) will require a special "passport" in order to travel at all.

Parking

Whether you are stopping at a roadside rest stop, a "Horse Hotel" or your final destination, it is desirable to be able to park in a shady area in the summer and a more open area in the winter. Unfortunately, shady spots are rarely possible at most shows, while open areas abound. Whatever the reality of your circumstance, try to park where the prevailing breeze can create air flow in the stationary trailer by coming in side vents, blowing across your animal picking up heat and moisture, and going out the other side. When you off-load your horse/s, make sure they are not in kicking distance of any other horses, are out of foot and motorized vehicle traffic-ways, and are securely tied to the appropriate areas usually provided on most trailer exteriors rather than just looping the lead line around the door. Wise precautions are always the best way to avoid wrecks!

As soon as you can, locate water outlets, etc. and make sure your horse is safe, comfortable, watered and fed. In other words, do as the old cowboys did and take care of your horse first.

Transporting horses is far different than hopping into your car for a trip to the local supermarket. With planning and patience, however, hauling any distance can be made into a safe journey and sometimes even downright pleasurable! ■