



Trailer Safety Checklist

By Laura Chapman-Bosco, Drew Conroy, Dwight Barney

Any time you haul livestock or horses over the road you must put great faith in the trailer or truck that carries your animals. Carefully inspecting the trailer and/or truck before you leave can save both animals and people from disaster.

The checklists below will help you determine whether your trailer is safe enough to transport your animals.

Inspecting the Trailer:

- Look at the trailer from all sides. Is it square and straight?
- Do the doors hang and swing properly?
- Are all latches, hinges, and pins snug and tight?
- Look at seams. Make sure there's no rust.
- Check the floor with a knife for rot.
- Check the mats. They should be in good shape, with nothing to catch feet on.
- Look at the dividers and center boards. Chest and butt bars should fit snugly.
- Check inside. There should be no sharp edges.
- Check tires to make sure they have no cuts, bulges, worn treads or steel belts showing. Inflate tires to the pounds of pressure listed on the tire. Make sure you carry a properly-inflated spare tire. For dual tires, hit the inside tire with a hammer. If it bounces back, the pressure should be okay.
- Be sure brakes are working properly and adjusted for your loaded weight.
- Make sure the ball is properly sized for your trailer (typically two inches).
- Make sure the trailer sits level when hitched. This may necessitate welding a hitch lower than a regular step-and-toe bumper.
- Hook the safety chains. Can you cross them to eliminate any droop that might catch on something?
- Plug in the electrical system. Check running lights, brake lights and turn signals.

Every time you go out:

- Check the hitch for cracks and the bolts for signs of wear.
- Make sure to anchor any tack firmly in place.
- Ensure there is no rust in the receiver.
- Make sure the ball is tight.
- Check the electrical system, brakes, running lights, directionals, tire pressure and chains.
- Check for hornet or wasp nests.

When traveling, make sure you have:

- Insurance card
- Registrations for both vehicle and trailer
- Current inspection where needed
- Coggins for horses and health papers for all animals

You'll find these items useful to have in the trailer:

- Basic tool kit
- Jack or portable hydraulic lift
- Extra twine, double-ended snaps, knife (to cut the ropes), crowbar
- Human and animal first aid kits
- A first aid kit includes: gauze squares, gauze, antimicrobial ointment, betadine scrub, cotton bandages, bandage scissors, thermometer, alcohol, small pail and sponge or cloth, non-sterile gauze squares
- Longe whip, longe line, an extra cotton lead, a lead line with a chain and an extra halter, sheet or blanket for horses; extra halter and lead ropes for other livestock
- Proper cables
- Chocks for tires
- Flares
- Large container of fresh water for animals and/or coolant system breakdown
- Towing chain
- Muck bucket, broom, fork and/or shovel, rake
- Fire extinguisher
- Water and feed buckets, filled hay net for horses (safely hung and fastened so it doesn't swing)

References

- Harris, Susan. "Trailer Towing Without Fear", *Practical Horseman*, February, 1982, pp. 18-24.
- United States Pony Clubs, Inc. Instruction Council. *Travel Safety*, 1980, West Chester, PA.

Visit our website: extension.unh.edu

*UNH Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
UNH, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and NH counties cooperating.*

Reviewed and Revised 2009-2011
Reformatted November 2014