

Trailer-Safety Checklist

By Karen Hayes, DVM, MS

Hauling your horse down the highway? Check off these safety points before you go, and have a trouble-free trip.

SAFETY POINT WHAT TO DO

Tires Check pressure, and look for signs of wear in truck, trailer, and spare tires.

Wheels Make sure lug nuts are tight on all wheels.

Hitch Look for loose bolts, hairline cracks, and other signs of wear. Check for proper hookup. (In conventional trailers, the socket should be seated on the ball and locked in place.)

Safety chains Make sure chains are crossed and hooked to vehicle frame (not bumper).

Breakaway Check cable length. It should be shorter than your safety chains, but not so short that it'll break free when you make a tight brake cable turn. Weave the cable through a link of one chain, so it won't snag and pull free. Make sure coupler is fully plugged in.

Truck Check fluid levels and fill fuel tanks.

Gear In addition to hay, water, buckets, and other horse supplies, pack emergency equipment in your tow vehicle. (See our top-10 list, below.)

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

- Extra halter and lead rope for each horse, for off-loading in an emergency.
- Emergency flares and reflector triangles.
- Flashlight (rechargeable, with an adapter that fits vehicle cigarette lighter).
- Jumper cables and spare fuses.
- Spare tires, jack, chock blocks, torque wrench, and WD-40 for changing tires.
- Tool kit-crowbar, hammer, screwdrivers, wrenches, pliers.
- Duct tape, for covering sharp edges in a damaged trailer and other uses.
- Fire extinguisher. (Make sure it's pressurized.)
- Horse and human first-aid kits.