



# Traveling with Your Horse: Trailer and Truck Packing

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Horse people love to go places with their horses. It is exciting and fun, and overall, it can be a great bonding experience—especially if you remembered to pack everything you need.

Scrambling to locate a girth or saddle pad in your trailer once you arrive at your destination, however, is no way to begin a successful riding day. If your destination is a horse show and not just recreational riding, then everyone is already a bit anxious—and no one needs more stress. This publication focuses on ways to alleviate this added angst on traveling day and ensure that everything you need is right at your fingertips (Figures 1 and 2).

The key to ensuring that all horse-related traveling necessities make it to the show grounds, trail head, or clinic is organization. The first step is to conduct a mental run-through of everything you will use, item by item, and then load each item in the same spot in the trailer every time (Figure 3). You can make a checklist or cheat sheet to hang on your trailer door and then check items off as you load them. If you use a tack trunk, you can put the list in there as well. The more you travel, the more packing experience you will get, and soon you will be able to tell just by glancing around your trailer if something is missing.

It can seem overwhelming the first few times, but if you stay organized, it will become second nature, especially if you travel often.

A week before you plan to travel, hitch the trailer and make sure all systems are working properly. Check the brake lights and turn signals, then check the air pressure in all the tires, including the spare. Make sure the towing vehicle has proper tire pressure for towing. Look inside the trailer and make sure it is clean, the mats and floor are intact and there are no sharp edges. If you do this

a week before your departure, you will have plenty of time to fix anything that is not in good condition (Figure 4). The day before you plan to travel, fuel up the towing vehicle and get accurate directions to the event. Put the destination into your phone's mapping app or your vehicle's navigation system and get an estimate of travel time. Remember that you may have to drive more slowly with a trailer in tow, so allow extra travel time.

If you are going on a casual trail ride, you may not have to organize as many items as you would if you were traveling to a horse show. If you are going to a show, plan to clean all of your show clothes and show tack, and polish your show boots if necessary, before packing them into the trailer. If it is the first show of the season, you might want to try everything on (and on your horse) to be sure it all fits and is adjusted properly.

Take time to consider the following categories of packing essentials that you will want in your trailer every time you head off the farm.

## Grooming Tools

It is helpful to have a complete set of grooming equipment that you use only for outings or shows; this would include everything from a curry comb and hard brush to a hoof pick and mane comb. Fly spray is a must-have if you are showing outside.

## Show-Ring Specialties

These products should never leave your trailer! They can include a shine product for the coat and tail, hoof polish, face highlighter, baby oil and rags. Extra banding or braiding supplies should also be included, in case your horse's mane gets rubbed.



**Figure 1.** A well-organized trailer can reduce travel stress. Photo courtesy of Mandy Endfinger



**Figure 2.** Packing travel necessities in organized containers makes it easier to find items when needed. Photo courtesy of Mandy Endfinger



**Figure 3.** Loading essential equipment in the same place every time makes it easier to notice if something is missing. Photo courtesy of Courtney Calnan



**Figure 4.** Checking and packing your trailer in advance can help to avoid last-minute problems. Photo courtesy of Courtney Calnan

## Tack

Mentally recite (or make a written list) of the tack your horse uses to show as you place each piece in the trailer. This practice will ensure that you have your saddle, saddle pad, girth, and bridle, as well as any extra equipment you may need, including breastplates or martingales. Be sure to include the cleaning supplies you will use to keep your tack clean.

## Laundry Basket

If you are planning on schooling your horse before your class, it is essential to have a place to toss sweaty or hairy wraps and pads where they will not get your show items dirty.

## Show Clothes or Outing-Specific Items

Any show clothes or items that you wear only while off the farm can be stored in the trailer after they have been cleaned or washed after the show. These include show coat or shirt, vest, boots, hat or helmet, gloves, class-specific equipment, water or feed buckets, and trail-riding saddle bags.

## Itty-Bitty Necessities

Smaller items like spurs, medical arm bands, number pins or string, gloves, hairnets, and jewelry can easily get lost in the shuffle. It is helpful to have a dedicated cosmetic carrying case or other small container to keep these items in one place and with their mates. This bag should be stored in an easy-to-access spot, so you will not need to climb all over the tack room in clean clothes to locate it. If you use clear containers, it will be easy to see the contents from the outside (Figure 5).

## Paperwork

Place your horse-health paperwork in an easily accessible area. Utilizing clear plastic sheets to protect your paperwork and placing them in a three-ring binder will keep Coggins paperwork, health certificates, and proof of vaccinations clean and legible. We recommend that you safely store the originals at home and make extra copies for the road. You can have a set of these documents in the dressing room of the trailer and one in the truck. Additionally, having an extra copy of the showbill in your trailer will keep you running on time.

## Hay, Feed, Bedding, and Water

It is always better to pack the trailer the day before your outing. Filling and hanging hay nets a day in advance, as well as packing all the hay bales, feed, and bedding you are planning to take, will ensure you have enough of everything. If you do not have enough at the barn, you will have extra time to get what you need. For feed, it makes the trip easier if you pack each meal plus supplements in plastic, resealable bags and place them in a tote or container with a lid. Consider taking water for your horses, which can be done by filling new gas cans (or those used for water only) or other spill-proof plastic containers with fresh water from the horse's home farm. Taking water from home will encourage your horse to drink; some horses do not like to drink "strange water" (water with a taste that the horse does not recognize) and can become dehydrated and develop colic. Containers with spouts make it easier and neater to fill the buckets. Don't forget the treats!



## Stall Maintenance Items

If your horse will be staying in a stall, you will also need stall-cleaning supplies. You may also need some extra stall hardware, like snaps, hooks, or straps. Baling twine has many uses! A good hammer is handy if there are nails or sharp edges in your horse's stall. Always check the stall for these before unloading the horse to avoid injuries.

## People Food

Remember to pack snacks and drinks. You can pack a container of snacks that do not need to stay cool, like crackers, chips, jerky, and fruit, and stock a cooler with water and other drinks. It is also a good idea to always keep water bottles and a few packets of powdered drink mix in the trailer to ensure you always have drinks, even if you forget your cooler at home.

## Additional Items

Many extra items are nice to have close at hand, including sunscreen, lip balm, bug spray, and lawn chairs. An extra halter and lead rope should always be inside your trailer, with another extra set inside your truck as well. That way, if a trailer accident prevents you from accessing the halter and lead rope inside, you can get the other set from your truck.

## First-Aid Kits

It is important to always have a first-aid kit for your horse and yourself every time you leave the farm. You can easily find human first-aid kits, and you can make your own for horses. For a list of recommended items to include, check [Traveling with Your Horse: First-Aid Kits \(ASC-253\)](#). Never underestimate the ability of totes, bins, and milk crates to keep you organized. Labeling containers you cannot see through is also handy. Packing as many items as you can the night before your outing will give you time to do one more once-over before you load your horse, making sure you don't forget any key components for a smooth outing (Figure 6).

### Publications in this series:

[Traveling with Your Horse: Caring for Your Horse Away from Home \(ASC-251\)](#)

[Traveling with Your Horse: Trailer and Truck Packing \(ASC-252\)](#)

[Traveling with Your Horse: First-Aid Kits \(ASC-253\)](#)



**Figure 5.** Small items can be located quickly when stored together in clear bins and drawers. Photo courtesy of Sarah Coleman



**Figure 6.** Remember to always check the tack room before leaving the property to make sure you are not picking up any hitchhikers unintentionally. Photo courtesy of Blair Cecil

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