

SUGGESTED BASIC IDEAS FOR HORSE CARE AT SHOWS

How well you care for your horse or pony before, when traveling, during, and after the show can make all the difference between a blue ribbon or no ribbon, feeling excited by how well your mount performed or being disappointed at his behavior, having to deal with injuries/health problems or having a healthy animal - or giving people the impression that you do not care about your equine partner!

So it is up to YOU to do everything you can for your horse so HE can perform as well as he can for you – THE HORSE COMES FIRST!

Here are some SUGGESTIONS for what you need to be done so you are SURE your mount is HAPPY AND HEALTHY. This way he can do his best for you!

**REMEMBER – SUCCESS IN THE RING
STARTS IN THE BARN!**

Preparation ahead of the show

HORSE

Check if mane **needs pulling** (at least a week ahead) -
(Better done early so it does not stick up when braided!)

Check that you do **extra thorough grooming** to get him clean! *(Make sure your grooming tools are **clean!**)*

Check to see if bridle path/ whiskers need trimming -
(Do this just before the show, BUT be aware that whiskers are there for a purpose – inside the ears keeps out flies – around the muzzle helps horse to sense depth – near eyes warns of things too close – so you might not want to trim some areas!)

Give your horse a bath one or two days before show – add vinegar when rinsing to get all soap out. *Beware of using Cowboy Magic, or other similar product, under the saddle (very slippery) or on the mane (hard to braid).*

Check Grooming Kit before the show – add the extras you might like to take:

Such as Baby Oil - *where does this go?*

(Around eyes, nose and dock)

When would Baby Wipes be helpful?

(For cleaning boots and hoofs, cleaning bit etc.)

How to apply fly spray so it lasts?

(Spray onto towel and wipe – esp. legs and around face)

CLEAN all TACK THOROUGHLY – **WASH** SHOW SADDLE PADS, WRAPS AND QUILTS ETC.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO AHEAD

Check truck and trailer – serviced and safety checked - *(There is nothing worse than being stuck on the road and missing your class.)*

Check tack – get any repairs done well ahead - *(Check the stitching and anywhere that leather is folded over i.e. reins, stirrup leathers or girth straps.)*

Check that tack all fits correctly – adjust as needed to be sure the horse is comfortable wearing his bridle and saddle!

(Get help if necessary to be sure that your horse's tack fits properly, as improper tack fit can cause pain.)

Check horse's shoes or hooves – plan a farrier visit in time for a trim or new shoes!

(There is nothing worse than losing a shoe and missing your class for lack of planning!)

Check your clothes – get them cleaned and ready *(Make sure all your show clothes are clean and ready to use since last time you wore them. Get everything together in time so you have it all at the show.)*

Check the PACKING LIST of things to load -

*(Much easier to have a thorough list to use so **nothing** is forgotten.)*

Check your CELL PHONE is working & fully charged and you have emergency numbers loaded!

PREPARATION – DOCUMENTS ETC.

Send in ENTRIES on time -

(Make sure you have completed the form correctly.)

Make copies of your **CURRENT COGGINS TEST** to take to the show -

(Do NOT go to a show that does NOT require this – you could be putting your horse in danger.)

Have your horse's **Health Papers** ready if needed -

(These may be required for crossing State lines – you could be in trouble if stopped and asked for them!)

Rule Book for the competition -

(You don't want to be eliminated for breaking a rule.)

Horse Registration papers (copies) if required

Membership Cards if required

Amateur Card if applicable

Prize List and Show Schedule so you know the classes you have entered

Riding times and Ring Numbers

(Put these on a notice board with the Test and Ring number and hang it near your stall or in the trailer.)

Dressage Tests – make sure you know these WELL!

OTHER THINGS TO DO

Make a **STALL CARD** with details of the horse – your contact numbers and hotel address – in case of emergency. *(It is vital that you can be reached if your horse is in trouble.)*

Directions to the show grounds – *use highways as much as possible as it is less tiring for the horse.*

Leave plenty of time for the journey so you arrive in enough time to get ready to compete and give your horse time to rest - *1 hour in trailer = 1 hour walking!*

Make sure your **flashlight** has new batteries! *(Take spares)*

Make sure you have a **HOTEL BOOKED** ahead.

Check your **FIRST AID KITS** (Human and Horse) and replace anything you may need.

Check your **TOOL BOX** to make sure it has everything you will need to set up the **stall**, or for the **trailer** in case of flat tires, etc.

Mark your tools, mucking tools, grooming kit, buckets, etc. with **colored tape** and write your **name** on it!
(This will help you to keep track of your equipment.)

Remember to Order shavings from the show unless you have room to take your own supply.
(Make sure you have enough to last.)

Make up your feeds in containers marked for each feed (at least three) on each day. **Take your own hay** if possible. *(rule of feeding – no sudden changes)*

PREPARING YOUR HORSE TO TRAVEL

Practice loading and unloading several weeks ahead.

Perhaps give small feed in trailer several times before actually traveling anywhere.

Go for short rides with careful driving to get horse used to traveling.

Put on Shipping Boots or Wraps so horse gets used to them (*always use in trailer – even for short trips*).

If long journey, adjust feed – more hay (wet is good) and less grain before traveling. Perhaps give pro-biotic.

Add Stressdex electrolytes to feed several days before - if not already feeding this – and take to show.

Add Gatorade or Apple Juice to one water bucket for a week or more so horse gets used to the taste. Use at show to disguise taste of strange water.

(Vital that horse drinks enough water – they sometimes drink less when away from home.)

Leave plenty of **time for loading your horse** and **drive carefully** so he does not have a hard time balancing.

LOOK AT PACKING LIST FOR TRAILER – PACK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THE DAY BEFORE YOU LEAVE TO SAVE TIME IN THE MORNING.

ONE-DAY SHOW TIPS

MAKE LIST OF EQUIPMENT you will need.

TAKE WATER FROM HOME to give for the day.

ENOUGH HAY (*perhaps soaked*) to last all day.

USE SMALL MESH HAYNETS – *horse cannot get caught up in them – also use **rubber release or quick release knot**.*

PARK IN THE SHADE – *horses can die of heat stroke if left in trailer in sun.*

RESERVE A STALL if available?

ALWAYS USE QUICK RELEASE KNOT OR RUBBER RELEASE when tying up inside or outside trailer.

NEVER LEAVE HORSE UNATTENDED - especially IF TIED UP TO THE TRAILER!

CLEAN TRAILER regularly — use muck bucket and empty in **proper place**. Do NOT leave on grounds.

NEVER LEAVE A HORSE ALONE ON THE TRAILER – HE MIGHT PANIC AND HURT HIMSELF!

AWAY SHOWS – SUGGESTIONS!

WATERING, FEEDING AND HAY

ALWAYS have **FRESH, CLEAN WATER AVAILABLE** at **ALL TIMES DURING THE DAY AND NIGHT**.

Use **TWO buckets** – preferably WHITE or light colored ones as this means you can easily see how clean they are. *(Take a top-up bucket with you so you can keep the buckets full easily, **BUT empty and scrub buckets at least once per day** or as needed!)*

An easy way to take **GRAIN** is to put **each feed** into a **Ziploc Bag or plastic container** – Label them so you know when each should be fed on at what time which day. In hot weather - keep in a cool/safe place - such as a cooler. *(This way you can add any medication or supplements that you normally feed. Good idea to add a little salt or electrolytes to a **feed** – most horses like orange flavor!)*

Take enough **hay with you from home** (no sudden changes in diet). *(Small mesh hay nets work well in the trailer – wetting hay is a good idea for travel. They are also good in the stall – keeps your horse occupied and eating fiber, especially if he is usually turned out during the day at home. ALWAYS use a quick release knot or rubber release ring).*

TREATS are popular and can encourage a ‘picky’ eater to finish meals. Apples/carrots are good to add to feed. *Mints are often easier than sugar as a reward.*

SETTING UP THE STALL

DO NOT PUT HORSE IN STALL UNTIL YOU HAVE MADE SURE IT IS SAFE AND CLEAN:

No nails or broken wood etc. that could injure horse -
(Look carefully especially in temporary stabling)

Remove any buckets or feed bins already there –
ALWAYS USE YOUR OWN *(to prevent disease).*

Remove any old bedding if left in stall -
(Might be dirty or dusty and to prevent disease)

Insert screw-eyes for **TWO water buckets** near doorway *(easy to refill)*

Use DOUBLE ENDED SNAPS to hang buckets
Same for Feed bucket or use removable manger

Use plenty of shavings and 'bank' the sides
(Keeps out draft and helps prevent horse getting cast)

Set up **STALL GUARD** – maybe two – at the correct height to prevent escape

Put up **screw-eye for HAY NET** and hang with quick release knot or rubber breakaway

Put up **STALL CARD** with your contact information

Keep stall **CLEAN** – **pick up throughout the day**

Keep all your equipment, tack, chairs, etc. tidy and organized outside the stall. And remember to **clean the stall** of all shavings **BEFORE leaving** the showground.

REDUCE STRESS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Get horse used to surroundings – take him around the grounds BEFORE going in to compete (especially at a one-day show). Also walk horse around when first off the trailer to reduce stiffness from balancing in the trailer.

Give enough exercise to make up for loss of turnout time (especially ponies or high strung horses), BUT not too much so he is too tired to perform well – **know your horse!** A good plan would be to do a short workout early when it is quiet, and then later warm up before your classes.

Cool out horse properly after exercise – NEVER put a HOT horse back into his stall.

In hot weather, **hose off quickly**, BUT beware of using cold water immediately on hot muscles – walk first. See that the water runs **cold off his body** before putting back in his stall.

Try to keep to as normal a routine as possible, especially with feeding grain!

ALWAYS do a NIGHT CHECK – Give more hay, top up water buckets, pick up droppings, and add blanket if needed, **but** only when weather is cold – otherwise he will overheat. *(Sometimes it's good plan to put on standing wraps to prevent injury to legs – especially overnight.)*

KEEP CHECKING ON YOUR HORSE THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND BE OBSERVANT OF HOW HE IS BEHAVING – ANY CHANGES NEED CHECKING OUT QUICKLY.

THESE ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY – BUT ARE A USEFUL STARTING POINT FOR PLANNING!