

# TWISTER TRAILER®



## TRAILERING TIPS

### REVERSE LOAD TRAILERS

Lately there has been a new interest in reverse load trailers. In most of these trailers, the horses load from the side of the trailer and face completely backwards or at a slant where their heads are towards the rear of the trailer. This month we interviewed some trailering experts who have done research into various styles of trailers. We also spoke to competitors and trainers who use reverse load trailers on their opinions of why these trailers may be an option for your hauling needs.

**TWISTER TRAILER®:** Are reverse load trailers a new fad idea or is there science to back this up?

**SHARON CREGIER, PhD:** I wrote my dissertation on Alleviating Surface Transit Stress on Horses years ago (1981), and have been a safe trailering researcher and speaker around the world. Rear facing transport was popular in the 1920's and 1930's and is again gaining popularity around the world. My years of research shows that horses tend to travel better when able to maintain its weight off its forequarters. In addition, it seems that horses were less stressed (vocalizing less, lunging less, keeping better balance, and arriving with lower heart rates, less sweating, and less respiratory distress) when facing away from the direction of travel. Likewise, damage to the trailer and safer towing was accomplished when horses didn't scramble in the trailer trying to maintain balance when braking and accelerating. We also saw fewer injuries and illnesses in the studies when horses faced backwards.

**TWISTER:** A Texas A&M Study from 1993 showed similar results, using one horse facing forward and one horse facing rear in a trailer, and they moni-

tored heart rate and cortisol (stress hormone) levels as well as counted the times the horse struck the sides of the trailer with hooves, vocalized or defecated during a trip around a track. The rear facing horses had "fewer side and total impacts and loss of balance and thus were better able to maintain their balance during trailering" and "having horses face away from the direction of travel seemed advantageous because of improved ability to maintain their balance."

**SHARON CREGIER:** We all have stories of horses hauled loose in stock type trailers who seem to prefer facing backwards. A horse's anatomy is built that way, to take the brunt of acceleration and braking on its strong hindquarters, as well as to protect its delicate head and neck from impact with mangers or dividers during braking. Another benefit is debris and wind is not directly in the horse's eyes, and oncoming vehicle noise, headlights, etc. isn't so jarring. It is my strong opinion that after 30 plus years of studying trailers and trailering that horses would haul better, and motorists safer, with a rear facing trailer configuration in almost all circumstances.

**TWISTER:** We have a couple competitors that prefer reverse load trailers. Charmayne, why did you switch and why do you prefer a reverse load trailer?

**CHARMAYNE JAMES:** Scamper [her legendary horse] always wanted to stand facing backwards. I think it helps them balance better and take the starts and stops better. We were in a trailer wreck where we were rear-ended, and I think that hauling that way helped him survive without injury. His rear end took the brunt of the impact. I prefer

a rear slant or reverse load trailer. I believe any advantage I can give my horses to get to a barrel race with as low as stress as possible is important.

**TWISTER:** Casey Deary, the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) 2012 Open Futurity Champion also uses a 10 horse reverse load Twister trailer. Casey, do you see a difference in your horses when you haul with a reverse load?

**CASEY DEARY:** I do see a difference. We have cameras in our trailers, and so we can monitor the horses while we are driving. I love my air ride systems in all my trailers, but I do think the horses haul quieter and don't kick or scramble nearly as much in my big reverse load trailer. I just think they are more comfortable hauling that way.

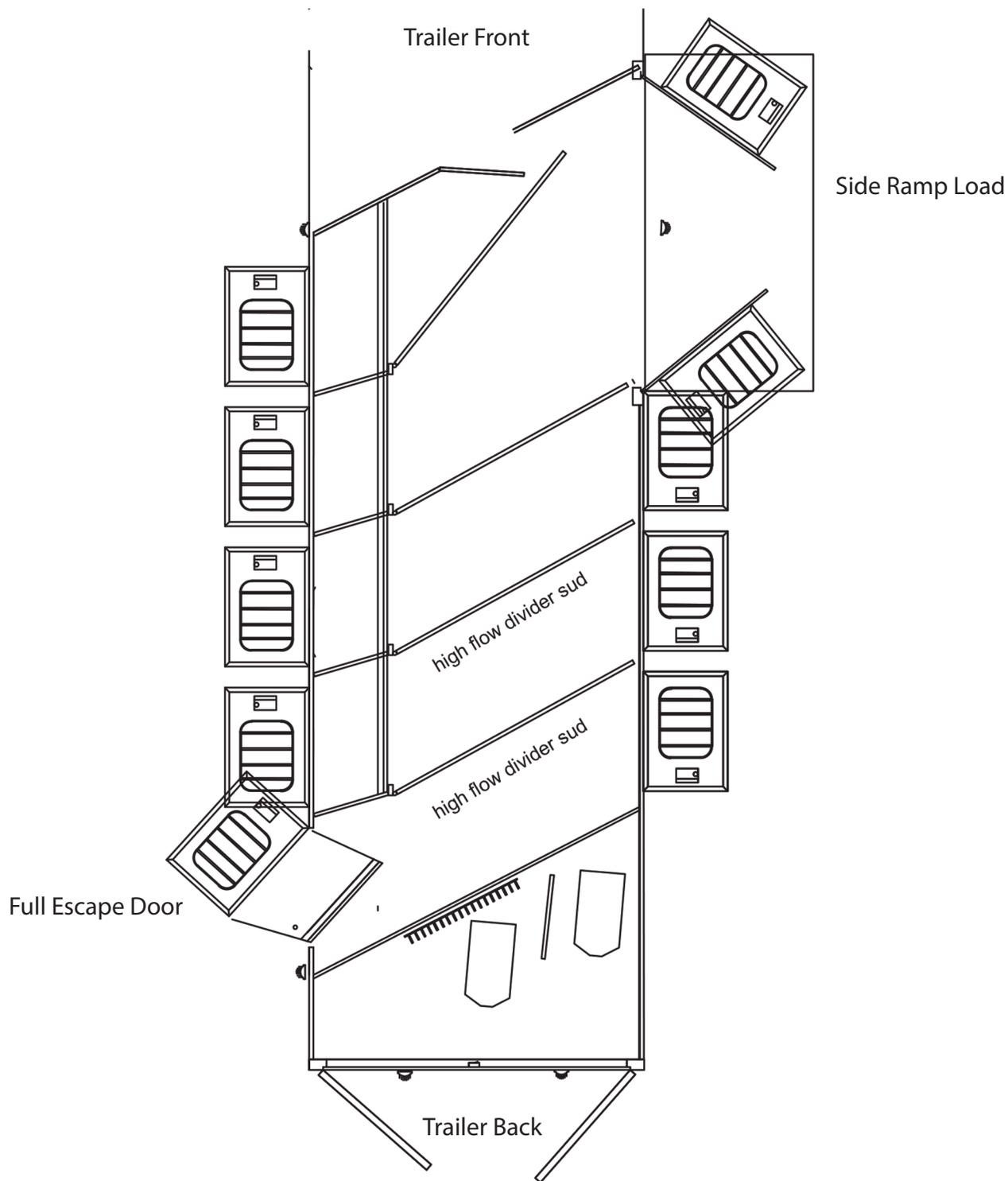
**TWISTER:** What are other benefits to a reverse load trailer? Any drawbacks?

**KEN RICHMOND (Operations Manager, Twister Trailer):** Many customers like the reverse slant trailers because they give the opportunity for a convenient rear tack room. Besides the convenience, in case of a rear end collision that extra space and storage keeps damage to the trailer and not the horses inside. The stalls are typically a little larger as well. The only drawback is that a reverse load trailer is slightly longer than a regular slant trailer with the same number of stalls. Also, with the side ramp, if you have a narrow unloading area that can be a challenge.

**TWISTER:** Thanks everyone for your insights on reverse load trailers! They may be an option for our Trailering Tips readers who are looking for a hauling solution for their horses.

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\* Sample reverse slant load floor plan, exact options and features may vary.