

# TRAILER TIPS

## WINTER HAULING IN COLD CLIMATES: WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE YOUR WINTER TRAVELS SAFER?



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article by **Robyn Volkening**

**M**any Rodeo News readers live in cold, snowy climates. Hauling in inclement winter weather can cause different considerations than your average summer trip. This month, we interview Nikki Steffes, a 2012 NFR qualifier, two time CNFR all around champion, and life-long rodeo competitor from Sturgis, South Dakota, who hauls horses full time 8 months out of the year, often in snowy, windy, and icy road conditions. Amy Weerts, a Twister Trailer dealer in Iroquois, South Dakota, offers advice as well.

**TWISTER TRAILER:** Ladies, tell us what you do differently as far as winter hauling on snow or icy roads.

**NIKKI STEFFES:** My biggest piece of advice is to go slow. I leave 2-3 hours early when the roads will be snow covered or icy, and I use government websites, road reports, and 511 to plan out my trip based on road conditions. During my drive, I will also call people on my Bluetooth who live in areas I will pass through to check the weather and driving conditions, which can change rapidly during winter storms or temperature changes.

**AMY WEERTS:** Hauling a trailer you have a lot more momentum, so you have

above: Hauling in inclement winter weather calls for different preparation - Image courtesy of Twister Trailer

to brake sooner, especially on ice or snow, and you have to watch for other drivers that can't stop.

**TWISTER:** Do you have any options on your rig that you like for winter hauling?

**NIKKI:** I loved having 4 wheel drive, although now I have a semi so I miss having that feature. I'm ordering a new Twister reverse load trailer because I think the horses haul better that way, and the new trailer will have air ride for the horses comfort as well. I'm excited to get my new trailer!

**TWISTER:** Do you do anything different for maintenance on your rig?

**NIKKI:** I always keep up on my maintenance, but I definitely make sure that my tires have tread and are inflated properly, including the spare, that my bearings are greased, and I keep plenty of diesel in the tank, because you don't know where you might be stranded or when. I also like to wash my trailer when the weather gets nicer or if I go south for a rodeo, it just keeps it looking good and the salt and mag chloride they use on the roads will really beat up the aluminum if you don't wash it often.

**AMY:** Make sure you have a good blend of diesel in your truck, and keep the items

with you to treat your fuel in case you do gel up: extra fuel filter, diesel 911, etc. You can ask your mechanic what he recommends for your vehicle. Also be careful to winterize your living quarters or park in a heated shop so your living quarters doesn't freeze up!

**TWISTER:** Do you take anything special with you when you haul in the winter?

**NIKKI:** I always take extra feed, hay, water, and snacks and clothes for myself. Sometimes there will be a blizzard and you end up having to stay somewhere longer than you thought. I have a checklist that I keep with me to make sure I don't forget anything.

**TWISTER:** Do you blanket your horses? How do you operate the air flow/windows during the winter? Any other horse care tips?

**NIKKI:** It depends on the temperature and how many horses I have in the trailer. If it's super cold and I'm only hauling two horses the trailer might get colder, so I will put on a blanket. If I am hauling 5 horses, maybe they just need a light sheet because the trailer keeps their body heat in and they will heat up staying upright during hauling. I usually keep the windows up, but I do like air flow. I stop frequently to monitor the horses' temperature. I think it's better to keep them a little chilly than have them get sweaty and then cold when you unload them or stop. My trailer is insulated, so it stays pretty warm.

**AMY:** I think it's important to make sure the horses are FULLY cooled out before loading them so they don't overheat or get a chill. Also, make sure the footing is good for loading and unloading the horses, you don't want to unload them on icy pavement or ramps or tie them to a trailer on ice or snow where they could slip. We install Polyplast flooring on all our trailers which helps provide secure footing.

**TWISTER:** Any other winter hauling advice?

**NIKKI:** There will always be another rodeo or jackpot, it's not worth risking your horses or yourself. Pull over and wait in a safe place or stay home if the roads get bad.

**TWISTER:** Thanks for your advice on winter hauling, Nikki and Amy! 🐾

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