

TWISTER TRAILER®



TRAILERING TIPS

Last month, Twister Trailer interviewed Dr. Christa Branch, DVM, owner of Snowy Range Veterinary Clinic in Laramie, Wyoming. Dr. Branch gave us some tips on how to help keep our horses safe and healthy while hauling.

TWISTER: Dr. Branch, last month we talked about training our horse to haul before we need to go somewhere so he is relaxed, loads and unloads easily, and hauls comfortably so he is less likely to injure himself, as well as maintaining our trailer to cut down on cuts, bruises and bumps. We also discussed keeping our horses hydrated, eating as normally as possible, and not overheating to cut down on colic risks. But what do we do if something happens while we are far from home or even while we are on the road?

DR. BRANCH: I would suggest keeping a well stocked first aid kit in your truck or trailer, including pain control like Bute or Banamine, bandage material, gauze, absorbent hospital pads, Furacin ointment, and a squeeze bottle that can be used to rinse a cut. You might have your veterinarian train you on how to administer intravenous medications, take your horse's pulse and temperature so that you are prepared in an emergency. It is also imperative to stay calm and to always consider your safety. If a horse is seriously injured and in pain, you want to be sure to not get into a confined trailer with him, or he could easily hurt you.

TWISTER: Last month, you said the most common ailments you see from hauling are cuts, colic, and foreign bodies in an eye. How would you treat each of these injuries until you could get to a veterinarian? And how do you know if you should seek immediate veterinary care or if you could keep traveling to your destination?

DR. BRANCH: For a cut, first try to clean out the debris with a hose or squeeze bottle of water, then assess how deep the cut is. If needed, put pressure on the wound stop the bleeding, and then keep it clean with an absorbent pad held in place with a wrap. Some areas of the body are impossible to wrap, but keeping the cut clean is important to avoid infection. Unless the cut is extremely deep, you can probably continue to your destination before seeking vet assistance. You could also administer 2 grams of oral Bute for pain and to cut down on swelling. For a potential colic, you need to assess the pain of the animal. If the horse is just slightly uncomfortable, but still alert and not in significant pain, sweating or trying to lay down, you can administer 10 cc's of Banamine intravenously to attempt to make the horse more comfortable. If it is a slight colic and you are close to your destination, sometimes the motion of the trailer ride will help make the horse more comfortable. If the horse is trying to lie down in the trailer, this is an emergency. Quickly, you need to assess where the nearest vet or vet clinic is located. After administering

10 ccs of intravenous Banamine, you either need to drive the horse directly to the vet clinic, or find a safe, quiet location to unload and walk the horse while maintaining contact via phone with a veterinarian.

For a foreign body in the eye, assess the foreign body location. If it is lying on the surface, sometimes you can take a clean cloth and carefully move it off the eye. If the foreign object is protruding from the eye, this is an emergency situation and you need to get to the nearest vet, as soon as possible. It is important to cover the eye so that there isn't more damage. A woman's bra works well for this; you can cut out the cup for the good eye and use the straps to affix the bra to the horse like a mask, covering the injured eye.

TWISTER: So the key to keeping our horses as healthy as possible is to keep your trailer maintained and clean, train your horse to haul, keep him calm and hydrated, monitor his comfort and physical condition during a trip, and assess any injuries or illness for severity. Thank you for your help, Dr. Branch!