YOUR PRE-DRIVE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Before any kind of trailer travel, do a once-over in these areas, checking that:

✔ All lights are working;
✔ Brakes are working, and brake maintenance is up-to-date;
✔ Trailer hitch is secure, and safety chains are on;
✔ Dirt and debris are swept out;
✔ Trailer mats are clean and dry;
✔ Dividers are securely fastened;
✔ Loose, rattling parts have been tightened or secured;
✔ Sharp edges or loose wires inside trailer are fixed;
✔ Trailer is loaded properly and within weight limits;
✔ Lug nuts on all wheels are tight; and
✔ Tire pressure is within recommended ranges when tires are cold.

Be sure you’ve packed:

✔ First aid kits for horses and humans;
✔ An emergency kit with flares or cones, a working jack, and extra halters and lead ropes;
✔ A fire extinguisher that is working and easily accessible;
✔ A lug wrench or tire iron, and a tire pressure gauge;
✔ Fully charged cell phone(s), and a charger on board;
✔ A list of emergency numbers, including physician and veterinarian;
✔ Equipment and gear that is secured in the trailer with bungee cords or rope to keep things in place in the event of a collision.

Once horses are loaded and before driving off, check that:

✔ Horses are tied securely and with proper length of lead rope or quick-release trailer tie;
✔ Hay nets are securely fastened;
✔ Butt chains or bars are fastened; and
✔ All doors, windows, and gates are securely latched.

Finally, drive with caution. Towing a trailer alters the way your vehicle handles:

✔ Allow more time for stopping;
✔ Keep greater distance between you and the vehicle ahead;
✔ Signal for turns earlier;
✔ Stop every few hours to give your horses a break from the motion and noise, and to offer them water; and
✔ If you’re driving more than 12 hours, break it up and plan to stay somewhere overnight.

—Lisa Kemp