

Tips for a Successful Summer Show Season

As summer approaches, there are many important things to consider when planning your summer show schedule. The health and safety of you and your horse should be your top priority. Here are recommendations from the USHJA Horse and Rider Advocate Committee to help keep you and your equine partners safe while showing this summer.



Horsemanship Quiz Challenge National finalists participate in an educational lecture about trailer safety.

Preparing for the Trip

Before taking any trips away from home in your truck and trailer, it is important to ensure that both vehicles are ready for the haul. Complete a vehicle inspection to ensure that the truck and trailer are road worthy. Check all the fluids in your truck, know the age of the tires and check the tire pressure.

"I replace trailer tires every three or four years and keep maximum cold PSI to avoid blowouts and miserable hours on the side of the road," notes Horse and Rider Advocates Committee Chair Katie Young.

Trailer floors should be solid and without rot. All lights and the braking system should be in working order, and wiring for the trailer lights should be intact-not frayed or cut. Both the truck and trailer should be maintained on a routine basis, by a professional, according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

During the trip, it is important to have good ventilation for your horse to keep him comfortable. Open windows, and if possible, travel during the cooler hours of the day. Water should be offered every four hours, and it is a good idea to take 30-minute

breaks (without unloading) to monitor your horse's comfort level throughout the duration of the trip.

With good preparation, a keen eye for safety and a travel plan that aims for cooler times of day, you will be ready for your next long-distance haul.



Photo Credit: Jordan Cobb

At the Show

While at summer shows, keeping your horse cool in the heat is important. Bring fans and extension cords to hang outside of the stalls to improve ventilation. If the stalls are particularly hot, occasionally bring your horse outside to graze in the shade and enjoy a summer breeze. Always pack hoses and bathing tools to wash horses prior to and after exercising, and keep an eye on a horse's water bucket throughout the day to ensure it is clean and water is available. Also, pay attention to the amount of sweat your horse produces. Anhidrosis, or the absence of an adequate amount of sweat, can be very dangerous. To learn more about anhidrosis and to learn the warning signs, [click here](#).

[Do you know the best way to cool out a hot horse?](#)



Horse Name	
Horse Description and Disposition	
Owner Name	Phone
Primary Emergency Contact	Phone
Secondary Emergency Contact	Phone
Additional Emergency Contact	Phone
Vet Name	Phone
Additional Information:	

[Click here](#) for printable copy of stall card.

Stall Cards

When setting up at the show, one of the smallest items can be one of the most important. Ensuring you have a stall card visible with relevant information about your horse can help your horse get proper care even when you are not around and can be essential in an emergency.

"Not all people associated with a horse or pony are present in the stable 24 hours a day. Anyone in the vicinity of the stable may observe a problem or question about the horse or pony. With the information provided on the stall card, they may make contact with appropriate people to secure the best interests of the horse," says Dr. Stephen Soule, veterinarian and USHJA Horse and Rider Advocate Committee member.

Stall cards should include, at the very least, the following information:

- Horse's name
- Brief description of the horse (color, age, sex)
- Comment on his demeanor (does he kick, bite, crib, etc.) for the safety of anyone who may need to enter the stall in your absence in an emergency situation
- Owner's name and phone number
- Names and phone numbers of any emergency contacts who may be able to make decisions on your behalf or help reach you in an emergency, such as a trainer, stable manager, groom, spouse, friend, your regular farrier, and/or veterinarian

- Any other special instructions or information such as feeding instructions, medications, allergies, etc.

Stall cards should be customized to suit the needs of you and your horse. The most important thing to remember is to list contacts who know your horse and can help him, and you, during an emergency.



Photo Credit: Jordan Cobb

Ride Smart

Summer heat has real implications for your riding plans. In the summer heat, plan a horse's training during cooler times of the day for both the safety of the horse and rider.

Of course, riders don't always have control over when they compete. When showing occurs during the hottest part of the day, keep your warm-up to a minimum and schedule fewer classes to avoid overheating. Talk with your trainer about the best plan for you and your horse.

Riders should also keep in mind that judges will often waive jackets in extreme temperatures. Listen to the guidance of judges, knowing that when they waive hunt coats, they will not hold it against the rider. Becoming overheated as a rider may have deadly consequences. [The Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends that athletes should drink more water than usual, wear loose and lightweight clothing, and look for signs of dehydration or heat stroke. Seek medical care immediately if you or another rider begins to show signs of a heat-related illness.

While at home, on the road or during competition, you and your horse's safety is most important. Drink plenty of water, avoid the heat of the day, and take frequent breaks in the shade. If you follow the guidelines above, you are on your way to an enjoyable and safe summer show season. Always heed the guidance of medical professionals and veterinarians respectively when it comes to your health and that of your horse.