

Hit *the* Road



*You're ready to hit the road for the showseason,
but do you have the right horse trailer?*

By Megan Arszman

IT'S INEVITABLE – IF YOU OWN A HORSE, OR TWO, SOONER OR later, you're going to be looking for a way to get him from Point A to B. Purchasing a new (or used) trailer can be exciting, but also intimidating because there are so many different options to choose, from: gooseneck or bumper pull, slant load or straight, two- or four-horse, there's a lot that goes into your purchase.

- Think about these factors when deciding which direction to go:
- What is the maximum number of horses you might haul?
- How do you want to store your tack?
- Do you anticipate many long hauls, or just quick weekend trips?
- What kind of vehicle are you planning to haul the trailer with, or do you plan on purchasing a new one?

Perhaps the most vital question would be, how do you plan on paying for the trailer?

Financing Your Trailer

MATT PAVONE IS A BROKER WITH ALL ROADS CAPITAL, based out of Ohio. The company deals with trailers of all types – stock trailers, campers, horse trailers and boat haulers. He emphasizes the importance of potential buyers being aware of their financial situation.

“One of the big things we run into a lot with lenders is that there are different classifications of horse trailers because they are a niche market,” Matt says. “The trailers with living quarters are looked at by lenders as a type of recreational vehicle, even if you are using it for a business. When you fall into that type of category, the trailer becomes more of a ‘want’ versus a ‘need.’”

Matt says everyone basically needs a car nowadays to get to and from work. However, a horse trailer with living quarters is not considered quite the same level of necessity, so lenders tend to scrutinize credit a lot more on such items.

For instance, the financing rate on your car might be 3.99 percent, but your trailer could be 8.99 percent, or more. Yes, you might be a horse trainer and you need your trailer for your job, but the living quarters in a horse trailer makes it recreational – you could be living there or using it to camp at the local park, it doesn't matter.

"Financing rates for horse trailers can be anywhere from 4.99 percent all the way up to 17.95," Matt says.

One important factor to getting the best rate for your trailer is your credit score.

"A lot of banks look for your credit score to be 650 or above," Matt says. "They will look at your debt-to-income ratio, which means the amount of money you have going out versus how much money you have coming in. The ideal ratio needs to be below 40 percent."

Another difference between financing a horse trailer versus a car, he points out, is that if you have \$1,000 coming in and pay \$500 for bills, etc., that puts you at 50 percent indebted. That would still work for a car loan, but not a trailer loan.

And, finally, be prepared to be able to put down at least 10 percent of the cost of the trailer.

Matt recommends doing your homework before choosing a brokerage company or bank to work with on your loan.

"Some broker companies might just send your credit score to multiple banks looking for a loan, and that can hurt your credit score," he says. "Our company will choose and select one or two banks to get the best rate for you. So we suggest that you talk with the financial institution and tell them you don't want your score going out to multiple groups. Ask that you work together to figure out the best route to take and go from there."

How Big is Your Truck?



Your tow vehicle needs to be able to haul the trailer you've chosen.

COURTESY OF B&W HITCHES

Gooseneck vs. Bumper-Pull

"THE GOOSENECK TENDS TO BE THE MOST common hitch route to go in the horse industry," says Eric Stewart, sales manager with B&W Hitches.

A bumper-pull has its advantages.

"The bumper-pull trailers are easier to pull because the trailer will follow wherever the truck goes," says Rick Looney, salesman for Diamond R Trailers in Stephenville, Texas. "The gooseneck, however, is easier on the truck itself – it sits

the actual weight of a single vehicle and its complete load. This means your truck and trailer is hooked up and loaded down – horses, tack, feed, gear.

Check that weight on a scale, then add 20 percent of that number on the scale for a safety margin. Your tow vehicle needs to be rated at that weight to haul safely.

If you'd rather not go through the process of finding a truck scale, you can look at the sticker that is usually on the inside of the trailer. It will include the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), which is the total weight the trailer can weigh and still be safe, as stated by the manufacturer.

Full-sized sport utility vehicles, such as the Ford Expedition or Excursion, or full-size half-ton pick-up trucks, such as the Ford F-150, do well for two-horse bumper-pull trailers because their weight is comparable for towing that size of a horse trailer. If you go much larger, or are looking at gooseneck trailers, the $\frac{3}{4}$ - or 1-ton trucks have the weight to haul appropriately.

Considering a Ford F-250 short bed pick-up for a gooseneck? Eric warns horse owners to use a little more caution in hauling a gooseneck with a short bed truck.

"We're seeing more and more short-bed pick-ups because they're easier to drive around town, easier to pull into parking spaces," he says. "However, using a long-bed is nice because you'll have plenty of clearance when it comes to turning the sharper turns – you don't have to worry about the nose of the trailer coming into your cab. But the trailer industry is starting to tailor more to customers with short-bed trucks."

Horse trailers with large front cabs, those that are up to 120-inches wide, are difficult to maneuver with a short-bed truck. But newer models of gooseneck trailers are starting to have more V-shaped noses to allow for more clearance for short-bed drivers. Or drivers can purchase an extender, such as the one B&W Hitches sells, that gives them more clearance on the short-bed for a gooseneck hitch.

No matter the type of trailer or tow vehicle you choose, consider installing an electric braking system that allows horse owners to control the trailer brakes from the cab of the vehicle.

Should they run into issues such as the trailer swaying, they can activate the trailer brakes rather than using the vehicle brakes to gain control.

WHETHER YOU'VE ALREADY BOUGHT THE TRAILER AND ARE looking for a new towing vehicle, or you're looking for a new vehicle to tow the trailer you already have, you need to do your research of what is the best fit for your towing needs.

First, learn the gross vehicle weight (GVW) of your trailer:

right on your rear axle, where the bumper-pull is on the very end of your pickup (the undercarriage, not the actual bumper). You haul the gooseneck, you pull the bumper-pull."

If you're looking for a trailer to use for short, infrequent drives, a bumper-pull might be the way to go. Looking to

As you hit the road this summer, make sure your precious cargo is safe.



SHUTTERSTOCK/GREENFIRE

haul more horses a greater distance? A gooseneck might fit the bill.

Rick points out that how horse owners stack the load in bumper-pulls is important. If there's a single horse in the last spot of a three-horse bumper-pull trailer, expect some fishtailing because there is not as much stability with how the trailer is hooked up. The gooseneck provides more stability with the hitch, so a horse can be hauled loose in the box, or in any stall.

Other differences between the two types:

- **Storage/living space:** The design of the gooseneck allows for more storage space and the ability to have living space in the trailer, without adding too much length to the trailer itself.
- **Turning radius:** With the placement of the gooseneck hitch being over the rear axle of the truck, the trailer turns when the truck turns, making for a tighter turning radius
- **Towing options:** The bumper-pull allows for more options for a tow vehicle – it doesn't just have to be a pick-up truck, but can also be a sport utility vehicle or a passenger van. As long as the towing capacity on the vehicle meets or exceeds the weight of the trailer with occupancy, it can tow a bumper-pull.
- **Price:** Bumper-pulls tend to be less expensive than goosenecks.

A third option isn't as popular with the general public, but those who haul larger loads longer distances might look at a fifth-wheel option, Eric says.

Fifth-wheel hitches are a lot like gooseneck hitches, especially in placement of the hitch, but instead of a ball hitch, it's a disc. The construction of the fifth-wheel

PREVENTING TRAILER THEFT

How many times have you backed up to your trailer at a horse show, hooked up, loaded up and left without anyone asking any questions? Probably way too many times to count, right?

And if you don't use a trailer or hitch lock that could exactly be what happens to your trailer at the next horse show.

One of the easiest and least expensive steps you can take to prevent theft is to purchase a trailer lock. Using a trailer lock, whether at home or on the road, will help deter theft. The hitch lock fits into your hitch and is secured with a key. This is a better option than just using a padlock because a padlock can easily be cut through.

Purchasing a locking coupler, like B&W Hitches' The Defender, allows you to lock up your trailer to prevent someone from stealing your trailer whether it's attached to your truck or not.

You can also purchase a locking receiver hitch pin that secures the bumper hitch to the receiver on your truck. This way if you like to leave your truck hooked up to your bumper pull trailer, you can prevent someone from unhooking your trailer and hooking it to another vehicle and driving off.

Other options include:

- Trailer wheel locks
- Security alarms
- Custom paint or decal job

allows for a less rigid ride than the standard gooseneck hitch and allows for more control over the trailer.

“That’s why you see a lot of people who tow RVs for a living, using fifth-wheel hitches,” Eric says. “If they’re traveling long distances, they want a smoother ride.”

The hitch of your truck and trailer is one of the easiest things to care for, he says.

“As long as you keep everything greased and lubricated, your hitch should last you a long time,” he says.

Stock Trailer or Horse Trailer?

HORSES CAN BE HAULED IN LIVESTOCK TRAILERS OR SPECIFIC horse trailers. Stock trailers offer the option of flexibility: They can be used to haul any type of livestock, including horses. As long as the trailer itself is appropriately sized for horses (taller height, wider width, external wheels), it can be a valid choice for horse owners.

The exterior differences between the two trailers can be easy to see – stock trailers are usually partially open with slatted sides. Some stock trailers might lack internal dividers to separate animals. Horse trailers are mostly fully enclosed with windows and vents that can be opened or closed depending on the weather.

New or Used?



COURTESY OF B&W HITCHES

AS WITH PURCHASING A VEHICLE, SOMETIMES BUYING A USED trailer makes more sense, price-wise, than purchasing a brand-new trailer. Choosing the right used trailer takes just as much research as purchasing a new trailer.

Financing a used trailer tends to be a little more difficult, Matt says, mostly because it can depend on the age of the trailer.

“Most lenders we deal with will only look at trailers that are 2008 or newer, but we have some that’ll go back to 2004,” he says. “It just depends on the lender and what their qualifications are, and how long they’ve done business with the broker.”

He recommends research for comparable trailers on sites such as *horsetrailerworld.com* and saving as much for a down payment as possible.

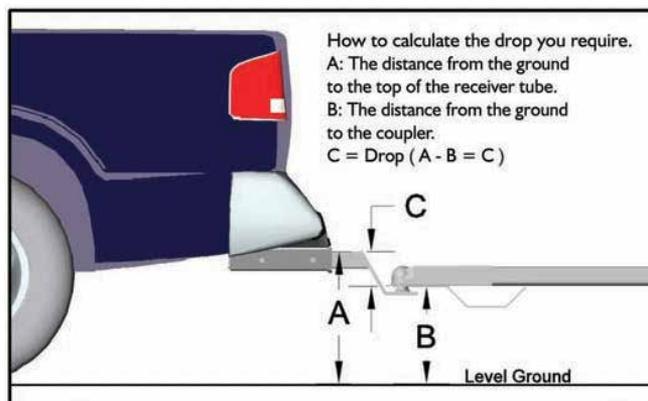
“Get the facts. If you’re looking at used units, get some comparables and do research online,” he recommends.

Most banks will not finance a loan for person-to-person sales, Matt says.

“Those are mostly cash-only transactions because most of the major lenders are worried about the title – is there a lien on the title, or is the title missing? I know there are a few banks and credit unions that, if you’ve been with them for some time, they might give you a loan, but not most,” he says.

Choosing a Hitch

Tow & Stow Receiver Hitch How to calculate the drop:



COURTESY OF B&W HITCHES

ONCE YOU’VE CHOSEN THE TYPE OF TRAILER YOU WANT TO HAUL, choosing a hitch for your truck is relatively easy. AQHA Corporate Partner B&W Hitches has an array of hitches to fit tow vehicles and trailers, and the company’s customer service representatives are able to help you choose the right direction.

The company has different styles of the gooseneck hitch, including B&W’s Turnover Ball, allowing more flexibility in the use of a truck bed. Need to haul furniture one weekend? You’ll have a flat surface to load the bed. The next weekend is a horse show? Turn over the ball hitch and you’re ready to haul.

For bumper-pulls, look at the owner’s manual for the tongue weight (TW), which is the amount of the weight that rests directly on your hitch. When you use TW with your GTW, you can determine the hitch that should be installed on your vehicle because you can narrow it down to one or two weight class ratings.

Most full-size vehicles will be in either class 3 or 4/5 – needing a receiver with the possible addition of a weight distribution hitch.

If you go with an adjustable ball mount for your bumper-pull hitch, you will need to determine the height of the receiver on your truck and the height of the tongue of your trailer from the ground to a level point.



In a sea of horse trailers, how do you choose the right one?

LARRY JO STARKER

Insuring Your Rig

WHILE YOU MUST HAVE AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE TO DRIVE, YOUR auto insurance might not cover your horse trailer. Even if your policy does cover your trailer, it might not be enough coverage.

Typical auto insurance policies only cover liability if they have an added basic trailer rider. Most trailer riders provide limited coverage and won't protect the contents of your trailer (horses and tack).

Instead, ask your insurance company about a specialized horse trailer insurance policy to protect everything you'll be hauling down the road. This special policy covers physical damage to your trailer, as well as the contents in your trailer, whether by traffic collision, fire, theft, vandalism or unpreventable catastrophic events.

Other items that might be included in a specialized horse trailer insurance policy:

- **Roadside assistance:** If you're hauling long distances, this keeps you sleeping sound at night knowing if you break down, you'll be covered. Horse trailers need specialized towing services, so you'll need a specialized policy.
- **Compensation for damage to your trailer, or theft:** Depending on the company, you might be able to choose between replacement value and actual cash value coverage for your trailer.
- **Equipment coverage:** Optional, but it can cover you for loss or damage to your tack, equipment and trailer upgrades.
- **Coverage for added expenses resulting from a covered loss:** This means you might be able to receive compensation for boarding your horse and trailer rental while your trailer is being repaired. Veterinary services might also be covered if your horse is injured during or because of a covered incident.

Speak with your current auto insurance company about what you can do to add more coverage to your horse trailer. Don't be

afraid to do a little comparison shopping for the best rates and the best coverage to fit what you're looking for. You might find that you have trailer insurance with a different company.

Hitting the Road

ONCE YOU FINALLY HAVE YOUR RIG TOGETHER AND LOADED up, it's time to hit the road and enjoy your American Quarter Horses.

Remember to give yourself plenty of room to stop, use your turn signals early for lane changes and turns, and allow plenty of space for parking. No matter the brand, size or type of trailer, the most important accessory for safety is a safe, focused driver. ☑

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CREDIT SCORE CHECKERS

You've probably seen the advertisements for websites that offer you free credit score checks, promising they won't hurt your credit score. Matt Pavone, a broker from All Roads Capital, warns loan seekers to be wary of these promises.

"A lot of those sites don't dive very deep into your credit score," he warns. "You might have some things on there that don't get caught. So while Credit Karma is good to see where your score sits, it's not that in-depth like TransUnion or EquiFax."

Federal law requires each of the three main consumer credit reporting companies – TransUnion, EquiFax and Experian – to give a free credit report once per year. Visit www.annualcreditreport.com for more information.