

## ADVICE ON LONG DISTANCE TRANSPORT FOR HORSES

There are certain factors to consider regarding long distance transport. The stress of which can result in:

### Suppression of the body's natural immune system.

- Impaired clearance of dust, bacteria, and any foreign substance from the respiratory system.
- Food refusal.
- A horse may lose up to 5 lbs of body weight for every hour they travel.

### Major complications associated with long distance transport include:

- Pleuropneumonia, more commonly known as **shipping or transit fever**. This is a bacterial infection of both the lungs and the space that surrounds the lungs. If a horse is tied for a long period of time – he is unable to get his head down to clear the airways. *(In order to reduce problems associated with this, we ensure that horses are allowed to get their heads down fully during transit – thus allowing airways to clear. We also ensure that there is adequate ventilation in the lorry – extremely important).*
- Decreased water intake causing dehydration. Some horses refuse to drink whilst travelling or dislike strange water. *(We closely monitor fluid intake throughout the journey).*
- Colic: When horses lose body fluid, the highly fibrous food that is in their digestive tracts also becomes dried out. This is a very big risk factor for impaction colic. This is why it is advisable to feed soaked hay.

## EFFECTS OF LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL CAN BE MINIMIZED

### Before travelling a long distance:

- Soak horse's hay in water to increase the amount of fluid he is getting.
- A bran mash and a few succulents, such as apples and carrots, will also help to deliver fluid to his system.
- Allow for frequent stops. Horses should not be asked to travel more than 8 hours at a stretch. *(We stop horses every 4 hours during normal weather conditions. We carry large quantities of water on board. Please allow us time to take these rest breaks. It is beneficial to your horse in the long run.)*
- Have your vet give your horse a thorough physical examination during the week prior to travel.
- Do not travel horse if he has had any respiratory disease, such as a cold or influenza, during the 4 weeks preceding planned trip. Prior respiratory disease will increase the risk of your horse developing shipping fever.
- Do **not** offer grain feed for a few hours preceding transport
- Accustom your horse to eating soaked hay during the two weeks prior to the trip. Eating soaked hay for one day prior to travel and during travel will provide your horse with much needed water. This will help avoid both dehydration and colic.
- If possible make sure that your horse has travelled – even very short distances. Research shows that horses that have never been transported will display much higher levels of stress.

### When horse arrives at destination:

- Feed clean (preferably) soaked hay from ground level
- Offer plentiful supply of fresh water – preferably not automated drinker, as it is then not possible to monitor intake.
- Do not give grain feed – possibly offer moist bran mash.
- Depending on length of time in transit, allow horse a few days to rest and recover. Allow good access to turn out to allow his muscles and digestive functions to return to normal.

### After long distance transport monitor horse for:

- Signs of depression or not eating.
- Signs of respiratory disease such as increased respiratory rate
- Fever, which may indicate either overheating or infection. You should take the temperature of your horse after long-distance transport, once it's settled down in the new stable. Check temperature in the morning for a few days. Any temperature greater than 101.5°F is above normal – call a vet.
- Monitor droppings.

**If a horse develops shipping fever he will need to be treated with antibiotics.**

In stress tests of transporting horses over long distances, it has been found that horses suffer the least stress when travelling facing backwards in vehicle.