

# Horse & Livestock Trailers 101: Maintenance Basics



The Transwest Team  
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Taking care of your horse or livestock trailer is a must to ensure both you and your animal's safety. While trailers are not equipped with the same mechanics as a vehicle, they still require ongoing maintenance to ensure they are running in tip-top shape.

This guide will discuss horse and livestock trailer maintenance basics and break down tasks by frequency. If you ever have questions about how to best maintain your trailer, please don't hesitate to [swing by a Transwest location](#). Our [service center](#) team is always happy to assist you in learning more about the upkeep specific to your year, make, and model of trailer.

## BEFORE EVERY TRIP

Before you load your animals, use the following maintenance checklist to make sure your trailer is ready for the road. Taking the time to carefully go over each task will help make your next ride smoother and safer.

- **Clean out the interior.** If your horse or livestock trailer has been sitting unused for any period of time, it may have accumulated dirt, debris, and even unwanted pests. Take the time to walk through the interior of the trailer, sweeping out the corners, removing any insect or rodent nests, and ensuring that hay racks are emptied of old leftover hay or food. Additionally, be sure that any watering dishes are cleaned and disinfected to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria or mold.
- **Inspect your tires.** One of the number one safety concerns on any trailer is the condition of the tires. Carefully inspect each tire by looking for worn tread, cracking, or bulging in the tire walls. Be sure to replace any tires that are worn out before hitting the road. Additionally, check your tire pressure. You can usually find the manufacturer's recommended tire pressure on a small badge located on the frame or tongue of the trailer. Make sure that each tire is filled up to the proper level, including your spare.
- **Test the doors.** Before loading up your animals, make sure that all the doors on your trailer are operating as they should and that they latch securely. This will help keep your animals secure during transit.
- **Ensure everything is connected.** Depending on the type of trailer hitch you have, you will need to either connect the ball and hitch or connect the gooseneck to the bed of your truck. Either way, before you pull away, make sure that all your connections are firm and that any pins necessary are set into place.
- **Check your lights.** With the help of another person, make sure that all your brake lights and turn signals are working. Test each one individually and attend to any burnt-out bulbs.

## AFTER EVERY TRIP

After a trip, take the time to go over these maintenance tasks. Doing this will help prep your trailer for its next trip.

- **Clean out the trailer.** After you have unloaded your animals, take the time to thoroughly clean out the trailer's interior by removing any food, water, or debris leftover from the trip. Sweep out the trailer and wipe down the bars and windows.
- **Wash the floor.** Using water and the appropriate cleaner based on your flooring type, wash down the flooring thoroughly. This will help prevent rot in the case of wood and will help keep aluminum flooring pristine.
- **Wash the exterior.** With the interior of your trailer clean, spend some time washing down the exterior. This is particularly beneficial during the winter months when salt and chemicals on the road build up on the trailer's exterior, which can, in turn, lead to damage to the frame.

- **Lubricate hinges, couplers, and ramps.** Go over your trailer and lubricate these items as needed. Be sure to only use the manufacturer's recommended lubrication based on the materials on your specific trailer.
- **Store it out of the elements.** If possible, store your trailer in a barn, garage, or under a carport. If you can't protect it from the elements, consider investing in a trailer cover to keep the sun from beating down on the roof and prevent rain and snow from damaging the trailer's body.
- **Keep track of mileage.** Unlike a vehicle, trailers don't have a built-in odometer, which can make it hard to gauge how long it has been since you last replaced tires, brakes, and other essential components. After each trip, keep track of how many miles the trailer traveled to help ensure you meet regular maintenance intervals.

## ONGOING MAINTENANCE AS NEEDED

In addition to your basic maintenance tasks which you will perform before and after every trip, make sure that you attend to more intensive maintenance needs. Use the following list to protect your trailer from roadside failure.

- **Schedule a professional inspection.** At least once a year, [take your trailer into a service center](#) for an inspection. A trailer mechanic can ensure that wheel bearings are properly greased, lug nuts tightened to spec, and will notice any underlying concerns about the safety of your trailer.
- **Invest in new tires.** Depending on how many miles you put on your trailer each year, you may need to invest in new tires every three to six years. Your mechanic can help you determine the right replacement interval based on your usage and tire type.
- **Check the roof for leaks.** Over time, your roof may develop a few leaks, particularly around vents and fans. Make sure to check for any areas where the roof is cracking or peeling. Most service centers will be able to repair leaks and can even reseal your trailer's roof, providing it a longer lifespan.