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Monthly Safety Blast
Livestock Trailer Safety
February 2012
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The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ kicks off next week and many 4-Hers, extension agents, and parents are preparing to travel with large loads and trailers. Before you hit the road, ensure that your vehicle and trailer are in good working condition and that the animals and equipment are loaded properly in order to avoid an expensive and potentially dangerous incident.

Pre-operation check:

- Check latches and safety chains.
- Inspect the trailer brake breakaway cable & battery.
- Grease wheel bearings regularly and replace them annually (or every 12K miles).
- Make sure cables are in good condition and supplying power to the intended places.
- Check all lights on the vehicle and trailer.
- Inspect the tires for dry rot, wear and damage. Check the air pressure in all tires, including spares. Replace tires at least every 5 years, regardless of use or tread depth.
- Make sure the trailer floor is sturdy and clean. Rubber mats are good for traction.
- Inspect lug nuts regularly.

Loading the trailer:

- Ensure that the elevation of the back of the trailer is as low as possible for loading animals.
- Be patient and calm as you load animals into a trailer. Do not excite or stress the animals.
- On a bumper pull trailer, put the heaviest weight distribution in front of the axles. Load older, bigger animals in the front and smaller, younger animals in the back.
- Tie animals high in the trailer using a slip knot.
- Make sure animals are aware of you as you enter/exit the trailer and tie/untie them.
- Be aware of pinch points.
- Close gates as quickly as possible. Make sure they are secure.
- Make sure nothing is hanging or protruding from the outside of the trailer.

Hauling:

- Don't use a lock on the trailer, especially while the trailer is in motion. In the event of an incident, first responders need quick and easy access into the trailer.
- Don't allow animals to hang their heads out of the trailer while it is in motion. Flying objects could injure the animals.
- Maintain a safe speed and stay alert!

Check out these resources for more guidance on trailer safety, including hitching.

Cattle Trailer Safety/Hitching: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pyd0rUAtliq>

Horse Trailer Safety/Pre-Op Check/Hitching: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nWPqAsiCwc>

Basic Trailer Safety: <http://www.hobbyfarms.com/farm-equipment-and-tools/trailer-safety.aspx>



Photo courtesy of Faith Caughron.

For more information, contact the SW Ag Center by phone at 903-877-5896 or by email at agcenter@uthct.edu.

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