



Equine
Liaison
Officer



HAMPSHIRE
HORSEWATCH

HINTS AND TIPS FOR TOWING HORSE TRAILERS

To introduce myself, my name is Sarah Cashman, as well as a horse owner I am a Traffic Sergeant with the Hampshire Police. I have been inspired to write this after a colleague did a talk for Winchester Riding Club and following my own experiences trying to buy a lorry during the last 6mths. I have seen some very clapped out vehicles that people are asking stupid money for so **beware!** I went all the way to the other side of Reading to see a Bedford TK advertised at £3,500, before the woman even opened the ramp, I knew I wasn't buying it, all 6 tyres were perished, there was a hole in the side wall the size of a 50p, the floor was rotten, but it did have a nice living quarters it frightens me to think someone has probably bought it on the strength of that. I hope they realise before their horse's leg goes through. To me the fact that the tyres were so poor was a good indicator of the standard of care the vehicle has had...none.

TYRES

Tyres are one of the most important safety features on both your car and trailer yet is one of the most commonly neglected. Through my work I have been to many accidents where tyre negligence has been a factor, such as incorrect tyre pressure and worn tread. The legal requirements for tyres are that they must have a **minimum** tread of **1.6mm across $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tyre**. Another very important factor is regardless of the amount of use, **the tyres must be replaced every 6yrs** this is because the rubber deteriorates over time making the tyre unsafe. As a part of your routine maintenance, look at both the tyres for cracks, splits or perishing (a crackled pattern on the side walls), spotting this early could prevent a

blow out, and change the tyre immediately. Make sure your wheel nuts are tight.

Do you know how to change a tyre? I encounter a staggeringly high number of drivers (predominantly women I'm afraid!), who don't know how to change the tyre and are prepared to wait 2hrs or more for a breakdown company to attend and do it for them, (at vast expense)

BRAKES

Any trailer over 750kg (unladen weight), must have its own braking system and if fitted it must be in proper working order. If you cant check it yourself, take your trailer to a dealer to check once a year.

LIGHTS

If there are lights fitted to the trailer, again they must be maintained in proper working order. (Basically all horse trailers will require to be fitted with lights). It is worth for about £20 buying a trailer board from somewhere like Halfords, which will have a complete set of lights. If you have a trailer board fitted, then the lights on the trailer do not have to work.

REGISTRATION PLATE

Does the registration plate on your trailer match the towing vehicle? This is important not just because it is a traffic offence, but I would hope that if seen by a police officer, you would be stopped if the plates were different to ensure the trailer hasn't been stolen.

INSURANCE

Although law does not require trailer insurance, it is worthwhile having because if you cause damage or injury to another party, you will be personally liable. Some car policies will provide third party cover whilst attached to your vehicle but check your policy before you tow.

TOWING WEIGHTS

Recent changes in the law have made towing legislation very difficult and I have to dig the books out for individual cases. The rule of thumb to work by is that if you want to tow with a car, the gross weight of the trailer should not exceed 80% of the gross weight of the car. In a nutshell, this does mean that very few cars are legally towing horse trailers! If possible buy a four-wheel drive vehicle because even a car that can legally tow, generally is not designed to tow and as such the brakes, suspension etc. are not going to be able to cope.

SPEED LIMITS

On **single-carriageway de-restricted** roads the maximum limit is **50mph** and **dual carriageway and motorways** the maximum limit is **60mph**.

AND FINALLY

During the show season the police are planning to target horse boxes and trailers, if you are stopped and there is a problem, you could end up with a prohibition notice being issued to your vehicle, (this means the vehicle cannot be driven on the road until repaired leaving you with the expense and difficulty of arranging recovery for you and your horse). I am telling you this now to give you plenty of time to check your vehicles and make sure they are safe for you **and your horse**. So please see this as it is meant, we want to ensure the journey is as safe as it can be for everyone.

PS 388 Sarah Cashman

Farnborough Road Policing Unit

