

Horse Trailer Towing

This question and answer might help you if you tow a horse trailer.

Q) - Is it a legal requirement to close the rear top doors of a trailer when travelling a horse on a motorway? Some say it is the law and others say it is entirely down to the driver's choice and what works best for their horse

A) - Unfortunately there is no simple answer to this question, from a Roads Policing perspective under the road traffic laws, any load needs to be secure. Therefore, if the horse/pony/foal is not secured by a halter/headcollar then the top doors must be shut in order to make the load secure. There have been incidents of unsecured horses jumping out the trailer if frightened, as the horses instinct is to take flight and open top doors provide an escape route.

The legislation governing the welfare of the transport of animals is - *EU Regulation 1/2005 and the implementing domestic legislation The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006.*

Regulation (EC) 1/2005 in Annex 1 Chapter II states -

'Means of transport, containers and their fittings shall be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to:

1. Avoid injury and suffering and to ensure the safety of the animals;
2. Protect the animals from inclement weather, extreme temperatures and adverse changes in climatic conditions;
3. Be cleaned and disinfected;
4. Prevent the animals escaping or falling out and be able to withstand the stresses of movements;

(EC) 1/2005 only applies to transportation that is part of an economic activity, e.g. farmers, hauliers, professional riders etc. who move horses in connection with their business, it will also include the transport of horses where an employer requires a paid groom to transport, for example, an equine charity employee transporting horses on behalf of the charity.

Journeys involving horses transported by an owner for the purpose of riding, showing or competing for pleasure are NOT in connection with an economic activity and are therefore exempt from the requirements of the legislation except, the provisions of Article 4 of the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 which applies to all journeys that are not as part of an economic activity, states -

'General provision on the protection of animals during transport

4. (1) It is an offence to transport any animal in a way which causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal.

(2) It is an offence to transport any animal except in such receptacles or means of transport under conditions (in particular with regard to space, ventilation, temperature and security) and with such supply of liquid and oxygen, as are appropriate for the species concerned.'

So after all that, my answer would be it is not a legal requirement to shut the top doors, if the horse is secured and the journey is unlikely to cause unnecessary suffering. If the horse is not secured by a suitable halter, or is likely to become agitated or distressed by other road users (lorries coming up behind etc.) and motorway noise, then the top doors should always be shut. The most important aspect of transporting horses (and often lacking) is in understanding how the horse is feeling during the process and reducing the stressors that are likely to lead to unwanted behaviours during loading and/or transport, through prior correct training.

From the **Horse Trust**.