

Should I Invest in a Trailer?

If you have horses and like to get off the property to ride, you probably have asked yourself this question at least once. There are many things to consider when thinking of buying a trailer and your decision should be based on your specific situation.

How often am I likely to use the trailer?

This might seem obvious, but without knowing how much you will use the trailer it is difficult to know if it is worth your while to invest in one. Many pleasure riders mostly ride around their own farms and would not use a trailer very often at all. Others like to ship out to local trails and would travel on a regular basis.

If you show your horse you will probably trailer your horse a lot more often. Some show barns send big trailers out to the shows, making it less advantageous to have your own trailer. Others expect their riders to find their own way to the show grounds.

Whatever the purpose, consider how often you need to ship your horse. If you are shipping once a month or more and are paying full shipping rates a trailer might be a sound investment. If you only ship a few times a year you might find it better to just pay a shipper.

Will I be sharing this trailer or shipping commercially?

If you intend to ship other people's horses you need to think carefully before proceeding. If you only want to take a friend's horse along for the ride and not get paid you can get away with it, but if you intend to get money for shipping you need to look into the regulations on commercial shipping. You might need a different license and will need special insurance. The costs of running a commercial shipping operation are high and you will need to ship quite a bit to make it worthwhile.

Is my vehicle up to the task or do I need a new one?

Not all vehicles are suitable for pulling horse trailers. Small two horse trailers technically can be pulled by many SUV type vehicles, but horses are heavy animals. You might find that a small vehicle can call the trailer while loaded, but the weight of the horses inside may make stopping very difficult. If you are in a hill area not having a strong enough towing vehicle can be a disaster.

If your vehicle is not up to the task of pulling your trailer, you will need to have enough money to buy a vehicle that can do the job. You will probably need a pick-up truck, at least a ½ to ¾ ton. These vehicles are usually gas guzzlers, so keep in mind that you might not want this to be your primary vehicle for getting around town. Used trucks can be reasonably priced, but you will be looking at something over \$15,000 for a truck with reasonable towing ability and in good enough shape to last a little while.

How much does it really cost?

With all these things in mind you need to sit down and do some math. How much does a shipping run generally cost you? Multiply this by how often you ship your horse. This will give you a base amount per year that shipping your horse costs you. For example, if you ship your horse twice a month to shows at \$100 a show you are spending \$2400 a year on shipping.

Now consider a trailer. The initial cost of a trailer varies widely. Used trailers can go quite inexpensively, but you are usually going to get stuck with a variety of repairs that need to be done before you can safely use the trailer. New trailers cost more, but will last longer and should not need repair in the near future. You can also get warranties that will cover some aspects of your trailer's care. A \$5000 trailer in the scenario from before would be paid for with just over 2 years of trailering. Considering that you will likely get 10 years or more out of a trailer that's not a bad deal.

If your vehicle is not up to the task of pulling the trailer you will need to purchase a vehicle that can do the job. At around \$15,000 for an inexpensive used truck it would take over 6 years of trailering to cover the cost. Adding this to the cost of the trailer you are looking at around 9 years of trailering for a full truck and trailer combination. If you need to purchase a trailer and truck you just might be better off sticking with a commercial shipper.

What are the added benefits of having my own trailer?

Of course your considerations would not be complete without considering what additional benefits there are in having your own trailer. One of the biggest advantages is the freedom of being able to ship any time, any place without having to fret about finding someone to do the shipping for you. If

you happen to want to attend a show or a clinic you can hitch up and head on out without thinking twice.

You might even find that once you have a trailer you will make far more use of it that you thought you would. There are many events out there that you might have avoided before getting a trailer that now are easily within reach. The more you use the trailer the more worthwhile the purchase becomes.

Finally, there is the knowledge that your horse is comfortable on your trailer and that you know exactly how safe and secure it is. There is no-one else to blame if things go wrong and you are fully in charge of keeping your trailer up to par. While the costs may add up when it comes to maintenance, you will always know exactly where your truck and trailer stand when it comes to safety.

About the Author

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