

# Farm Equipment

---

## TRUCKS

A quality tow vehicle can be a great investment. It will allow you to save money by doing your own hauling, and with proper maintenance a good truck should last and last. When shopping for a truck, by all means browse the used lot, but stick to reputable brand names for quality — the same applies for trailer and equipment shopping as well.

Hill's suggestion when truck shopping: "It's better to have more truck and not need it than to need more truck and not have it." Make sure your potential truck has the proper towing capacity to fit your needs. Towing capacity is determined by several factors including wheelbase, vehicle width, engine size, transmission, differential gear ratio, and the vehicle weight. However, the capacity is often based on hauling fixed cargo, so keep in mind the demands on a towing vehicle are greater for live weight.

"When you are hauling horses you should plan to haul about 25 percent less than the maximum load rating," suggests Hill. "In general, and especially for interstate driving, the weight of a loaded towing vehicle should be at least 75 percent of the weight of the loaded trailer."

Once you have your farm truck, be sure to get it serviced on a regular basis. If you own an old tow vehicle, it may be practical to trade it in on the purchase of a new one that is more powerful, uses less fuel, and costs less to maintain. Also cut down on costs by driving more conservatively and with gas mileage in mind. Quick acceleration, for instance, burns more gas than slowly pulling out into traffic. Observe the speed limit, avoid excessive idling, use cruise control and overdrive, lighten the load, and, when possible, try not to use your tow vehicle as a passenger car. This kind of sensible driving is not only economical but also safer.

## TRAILERS

If you're in the market for a horse trailer, weigh the costs and benefits of ownership before taking the plunge. How often would you use it? Can you trailer share with a friend or neighbor? Will owning and maintaining a trailer outweigh your yearly shipping costs?

When shopping for a trailer, whether new or used,



ensure that it meets your basic requirements and that it passes a complete inspection with flying colors. If you're considering buying a used trailer, have a mechanic examine it first. The extra cost is well worth it, and any findings or flaws may be used as a bargaining tool.

"If you are buying a used trailer, take your tow vehicle along so you can hook it up to evaluate the hitch or bed height, assess levelness, and to check lights and brakes," says Hill. "Used trailers generally have no warranty so you or your mechanic should inspect the trailer carefully."

A safe and sensible option for truck and trailer owners is USRider's ([www.usrider.org](http://www.usrider.org)) equestrian motor plan. This unique nationwide roadside assistance program is designed especially for equestrians and includes features such as flat tire repair, battery assistance, and lockout services, plus towing up to 100 miles and roadside repairs for tow vehicle and trailers with horses, emergency stabling, vet and farrier referrals and more.

And like your truck, have your trailer serviced and inspected regularly to keep maintenance costs low. "Making sure tow-vehicles and trailers are in good working condition can reduce the chance of accidents," says Julie Wilson, DVM, in the article she co-authored with Krishona Martinson, PhD, "Equine Economics: Optimizing Horse Health and Management on a Budget," for the University of Minnesota Equine Extension program. "Make sure all lights and brakes are working, tires are properly inflated, and ensure the trailer floor is solid and covered in rubber mats. Purchase a roadside assistance plan if you travel frequently with your horse. Have flares, a tire-changing ramp, road-side emergency kit, and a human and horse first aid kit located in the trailer." For additional information on hauling requirements and safety precautions contact the department of transportation.