

### ***European-style trailers and “horse boxes” now available in the States.***

Lynn and Dan Roberges’ path to becoming the U.S. dealers for Equi-Trek Limited horse trailers and “horse boxes” began with their own search for a safe, practical and affordable way to haul their horses.



The Portland, OR couple was intrigued by the styles in common use throughout horse-dense Europe. There, it’s typical that regular family-size cars and small SUVs, not big pick-up trucks, haul horses along often winding, narrow, bumpy roads in comfort and safety, and all for a reasonable price. Made in England, the Equi-Trek line has been prevalent in Europe for 15-plus years. Now that the logistics of importing them to the U.S. and servicing them here have been worked out, North American interest is building.

Lynn anticipates that the most popular models initially in the States will be those in the smaller sizes of Equi-Trek’s range. These include various-sized trailers that are hitched to a vehicle and several “horse box” models, in which the vehicle, horse compartment and, in many cases, a living quarters, are all one unit built on the vehicle’s chassis.

The trailer line ranges from the lightweight and easy to haul Trail-Treka and Space Treka through to the Star-Treka, with a stylish and well-designed living space that includes a double bed and toilet facilities.

A side-loading ramp and rear-facing travel for the horse are deal-maker characteristics in most models. Side-loading is a more inviting prospect for many horses. They are walking up and into a bright, open wide space, rather than stepping up into what can look like a dark tunnel, Lynn explains.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, there are many benefits to the horse in travelling facing backwards. In a UC Davis study entitled Physiology, Balance and Management of Horses During Transportation, it was reported that orientation of the horse within a transportation vehicle has been identified as a potential source of stress.

Here is an excerpt from this report:



“Several studies have examined horses facing toward or away from the direction of travel. The advantages of facing away from the direction of travel, or ‘backwards,’ include the ease of loading a horse into a trailer rather than having the horse face a dark, small opening which may be perceived as a scary cave (Creiger, 1989). Also, the hindquarters of the horse are positioned at the area of impact during braking or acceleration. In the back facing position, the horse’s head is not constantly carried in an elevated position such that the horse may use its head and neck to balance more effectively. It may also be advantageous that the forelegs are placed in the rear of the trailer because they may adapt to swaying motions more readily than the hind legs. This ‘buttress’ posture adaptation is commonly exhibited during grazing, whereby the shoulder provides better lateral support than the rear legs. Often, the rear legs engage in a side stepping action when responding to lateral pressure, such as experienced in a trailer navigating a sharp corner.

“A study examining the response to traveling forwards or backwards during a one-hour journey showed a significant decrease in heart rate in the horses traveling backwards. These horses also tended to rest more often on their rumps in maintaining their balance. The forward facing horses held their heads in a higher than average position and also moved more frequently due to difficulty in balancing. Interestingly, the forward facing horses vocalized more frequently. Heart rates increased at loading and unloading, and decreased during the journey as the horses became accustomed to the motion of transport. The authors concluded that the forward orientation may be more physically demanding due to efforts implemented to maintain balance (Waran, et al., 1996).”

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Equi-Trek's models are equally popular with professional horsemen and recreational horse owners. "They are engineered to be very lightweight and well balanced," Lynn explains. The trailer models work on a bumper pull hitch. "People in England don't have big pick-up trucks. Most of their roads are very narrow and those trucks wouldn't fit on them anyway." There are models available to fit everything from ponies to big Warmbloods. The smaller trailers that she expects to be popular in the States can be pulled by cars and small SUVs with standard V8 engines: Land Rovers, Volkswagon Tourigs, Jeeps, Hyundais and other normal family cars equipped with the correct tow packages for these lightweight trailers.

In addition to working out the importing logistics, the Roberges are developing a network of service centers, beginning in Norco and Sacramento, with more to come soon.

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*For more information on Equi-Trek Portland, call 541-806-6333 or visit [www.equi-trek-portland.com](http://www.equi-trek-portland.com)*