

TEN POINT LOADING PLAN

- 1.** Before loading, take time to familiarise yourself with the way that your box or trailer works. Make sure you understand how all the fastenings and safety catches work, and make sure that the vehicle is roadworthy and safe.
- 2.** Both you and your horse need to wear protective clothing. The horse should have a suitable head collar and a long lead rein, along with a short safety tie up already in place in the vehicle. When using boots the horse needs to be comfortable moving in them and they need to fit well. Some horses don't like travel boots and sports boots might be preferable in those cases.
- 3.** The handler needs to wear a hard hat and gloves, as well as sturdy boots.
- 4.** In ideal circumstances, and ALWAYS when training a horse to load, the horse should be loaded on a soft surface so that he cannot injure himself if he does react badly to the loading.
- 5.** The handler needs to be in a good frame of mind and to quietly work as a team with anyone else involved in loading the horse. Forcing a horse to load may work a couple of times but horses are more likely to escalate their behaviour if they are punished for not loading.
- 6.** Approach the ramp and allow the horse to relax and pause before being asked to take any further steps. To apply hard pressure at this stage is more likely to result in the horse going backwards rather than forwards. This will teach him that going forwards is always a good thing – especially if there is feed waiting in the horsebox or the handler rewards him.
- 7.** For the first time horse it helps to take him in and out a number of times, not allowing him to force his way out, and to do up things like partitions and ramps stage by stage so that everything happens gradually.
- 8.** Throughout the loading the handler needs to be very calm, to rub rather than pat, as a reward and to keep their voice low and slow.
- 9.** Travelling is an athletic endeavour for a horse, often being taken away from his friends and isolated. Any reaction is simply that of a prey animal, and not a sign that the horse is being naughty.
- 10.** Once on the move, the driver needs to give the horse the best journey possible. Journeys of about 30 minutes are ideal in the first instance, allowing the horse to learn to balance himself and for his adrenalin to drop. Many horses benefit from a calm companion when travelling.