

Show Stall Safety Tips

Make sure your horse is comfortable in his temporary quarters.

May 2, 2008

Traveling to a multi-day horse show has its benefits. The extra day or two on-site allows your horse to acclimate to the new surroundings before competition begins. But think how you feel when you're traveling: No matter how excited you are to be in a new place, the motel room just doesn't feel quite as comfy as your own bedroom. Your horse may have trouble settling in to his home away from home, too. He may be more agitated in his show stall, reacting to the strange horses and the sights and sounds of the showgrounds. It's hard for him to relax. This increased activity makes it more likely that he'll paw at the stall door, kick at the wall and pace in circles. Since most show stabling is overused and under-maintained, the construction can be rather flimsy. To prevent your horse from getting banged up in his stall or figuring out a way to escape, follow these tips.

First, you can help your horse unwind by taking him for several hand walks, especially on the day you arrive. This is especially important for young, green horses that arrive at a show and seem to think they're attending a giant horse party. Second, carefully inspect the entire stall inside and out for any potential hazards. Screw eyes and nails that were pounded into the wall for feed and water buckets by past exhibitors are a major concern. Your horse could bang his head or damage his eye on any sort of protrusion.

Next, bed the show stall heavily with shavings. Make sure you bank some of the bedding against the four walls. That will help keep your horse from getting cast in the notoriously cramped quarters of the typical show stall.

Finally, make sure the stall door closes securely. Use a snap or a stud chain if necessary so that your horse doesn't go on his own walkabout during the night.

By doing some minor repair work and general housekeeping, your horse should be more content in his temporary stable. And that should lead to a better show for you!