

All About Pets

The national pet care information service



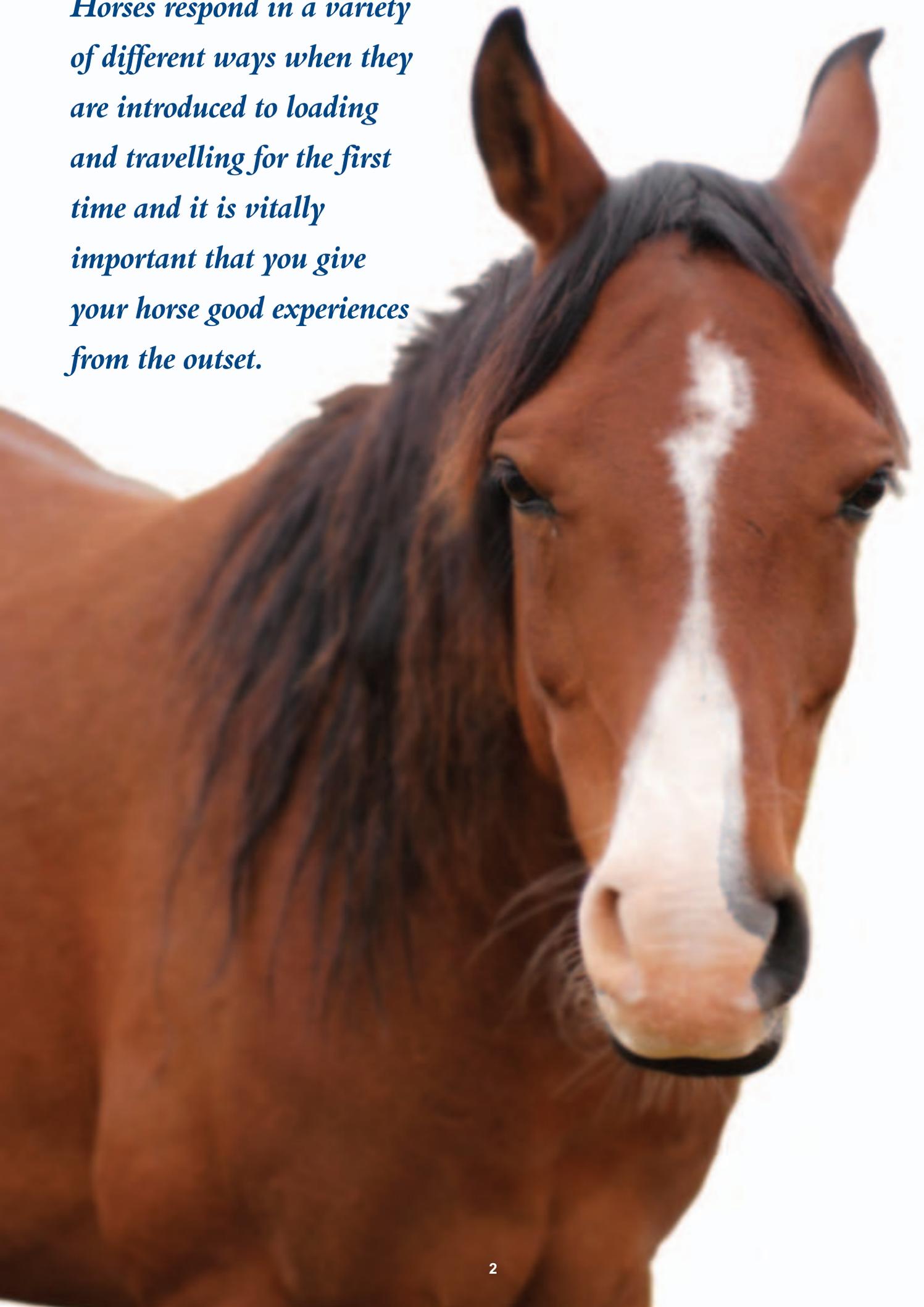
TRANSPORTING YOUR HORSE



THE BLUE CROSS

Britain's pet charity

Horses respond in a variety of different ways when they are introduced to loading and travelling for the first time and it is vitally important that you give your horse good experiences from the outset.



A number of factors associated with transport can make it a stressful experience for a horse.

- Separation from familiar surroundings
- Isolation from familiar group-mates
- Disruption of normal feeding, drinking and resting patterns
- Confinement for extended periods
- Restricted space that leads to restricted movement
- Exposure to traffic noise, smells and adverse temperature conditions
- Movement, braking and cornering of the vehicle leading to problems with balancing
- Poor driving
- Entering an unnatural, confined space which can lead to a fear response
- Not previously being trained to load
- Previous bad experiences with loading and travelling

Any of the above factors may lead to problems for a horse during transportation, and this in turn will lead to a horse being disinclined to load into a vehicle. It is often difficult to determine exactly what the cause of a horse's refusal to load may have been; however owners should examine all of the above possibilities.

How can I improve the transport experience?

In order to encourage the horse to load it is essential that the transport environment and the experience the horse has, is properly considered from the 'horse's point of view'.

The interior of a trailer or horsebox should:

- be light and bright, preferably with some form of natural light
- be solidly built to reduce vibration and swing
- be roomy – horses need to be able to develop a 'bracing' posture
- contain solid, well-padded partitions that are half-height and not totally enclosing, with a rubber skirt underneath – this will allow the 'bracing' posture and ensure the horse does not lose balance
- have plenty of headroom and space in front of the horse so it can lower its head
- have all furniture well padded – this includes a breast-bar at the correct height and a breeching strap
- have non-slip flooring
- be as dust free as possible, with good ventilation
- have a 'solid sounding' ramp (covered with matting of some kind) with spaced footholds. Make sure the ramp angle is not steep and the step up from the ground is not too high.



It's essential the vehicle is driven by someone with skill and experience – horseboxes and trailers should travel slowly, especially around corners and roundabouts. The exception is on a motorway, but be careful of sudden braking.

Horses should:

- be in excellent physical and mental health – if the horse shows any clinical signs of infection, or is injured, seek your vet's advice
- be offered 'familiar' water, or have been previously trained to drink flavoured water as the taste of water can vary from region to region and inhibit drinking
- be well ventilated and well hydrated throughout the journey – avoid over-wrapping the horse in blankets
- be transported with a known companion

Horses should not:

- be transported for periods of more than two hours without a stop. They should be checked, offered water and rested as necessary when the vehicle is not in motion, especially if expected to perform on arrival at the destination.
- be tied too tightly – this restricts head movement and can lead to a dangerous and stressful experience

Reasons for loading problems

Despite ensuring the ideal travel environment and conditions for your horse it is sometimes the case that horses refuse to load into the transport vehicle.

The main reasons for this are:

- inexperience – horses are naturally fearful of dark, enclosed spaces and often find ramp climbing difficult
- fear due to an adverse experience
- pain causing problems with loading and/or transport
- lack of confidence in the handler – the handler does not possess the necessary knowledge to teach the horse to load
- learned 'misbehaviour' – if the horse learns that certain behaviour is rewarded, for example the refusal to load leads to being left at home with friends and food, it will continue to have that response to the vehicle

There are no quick-fix solutions to loading and travelling problems. Patience and an individual approach is always required. If you are having difficulties with loading and travelling your horse, it is important to seek expert advice.



Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit www.allaboutpets.org.uk, the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.

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