

# WHAT HAS GRASS GOT TO DO WITH FLOATING?

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Floating horses should be the easiest thing in the world, yet for most people it is quite a nerve-racking experience! Maybe they've had a horse 'go nuts' in there or had one somersault out backwards, or heard of horses even going thru the front window.

What makes some horses panic so badly in the horse-float? Whilst horses have an in-built fear of confined spaces because they cannot flee from whatever they perceive as danger, with a good education they learn to overcome this fear and the threshold for panicking can be very high, in other words extremely unlikely.

However, when horses are 'grass affected', usually by either mycotoxins or mineral imbalances especially magnesium deficiency, the threshold drops significantly. They become touchy, spooky, and way more claustrophobic. Tiny little things can trigger huge reactions which are magnified in the confines of a horse-float.

Therefore it is necessary to have a good diet *and* a good education.

**Here's how to get 'all your ducks in a row' for trouble-free floating:**

1. Thoroughly check your horse-float. It needs to be structurally sound, especially the floor. Inspect the inside for hazards, anything sharp or protruding that could cause injury or that the halter could get caught on. Rump chains need to be covered in alkathene hose, rump bar catches need to work easily. Centre partitions shouldn't go all the way to the floor. Mats need to be non-slip.
2. Make sure the horse is not 'reactive' by feeding a high fibre diet, attending to your grasses as per previous articles and keep your horse minerally balanced all year round. These are *absolutely essential ingredients* for the horse to be able to think straight and not panic at the slightest thing.
3. Never use force of any description. If the horse doesn't want to go on willingly then he needs more education, not force. Stuffing the horse's body in without that horse's consent is a recipe for disaster. **Before** you even think about trailer-loading you need to **get him ready to load**. (more next issue) If anyone helping you starts getting rough and tough, SACK them immediately and find someone who can help in a more appropriate way.
4. Check your approach. Horses read vibes extremely well. Once I was there to retrain a lady's horse which was refusing to load. I stood quietly making friends with the horse which was clearly a little nervous, while she spent ten minutes ranting about what a stubborn mongrel of a horse it was and so on. When she had finished I suggested to the horse that he walk on, which he did without hesitation. I didn't have to do a thing! Horses aren't silly and simply don't want to go into scary places with a person who isn't offering any support and who doesn't even like them!
5. When driving ALWAYS wait until the vehicle and float are lined up *before* you accelerate. Accelerate *slowly*. Try not to use your brakes, decelerate *slowly*. Give your horse the smoothest ride possible, just as tho you have glasses full of water on the dashboard and you don't want to spill any.

Go to [www.horsemanshipnz.com](http://www.horsemanshipnz.com) and read “Floating Made Easy” and “Aspects of Pasture that can Adversely Affect Your Horse”. Book in for some lessons then you will never have to call on anyone else.

## “HOUSE OF HORRORS” For Horses

This float wasn't fit to load any horse on:

- slippery mats
- petition all the way to the floor,  
(you can see the evidence of scrambling)
- uncovered chains
- things tied together with binder twine
- hooks the halter could catch on or cause injury

When you load a horse into a horse-float you are *guaranteeing* to him that he is going to be safe. It is the ultimate betrayal to have the float fail in some way or for you give him a bad ride!

