

## Travelling on the Spirit of Tasmania with your horses by Debbie Grull

I have been asked to write a few guides over the years. This one is based on my experience focusing on travelling your horses on the Spirit of Tasmania. For those who don't know me, I have regularly travelled from Tasmania to Tom Quilty Gold Cup events over the years, with teams of horses, making numerous trips, achieving 10 buckles myself, winning the cup in 2016, and having riders achieve their TQ buckle dreams at least on 14 occasions (of Dennis Foley Seniors TQ camp tally of 46 buckles) .

The biggest tip is BOOK EARLY. As soon as you have committed to going to the 2025 Quilty in Tasmania, set up your budget for your trip and secure your Spirit of Tasmania fare. Being a native Tasmanian, I cannot attend a Tom Quilty event interstate unless I cross Bass Strait, and booking a spot on the Spirit of Tasmania is one of the first things I do, and sometimes 9 months to a year in advance. The 2025 Tom Quilty in Tasmania is on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2025. The Spirit of Tasmania is regularly completely booked out. Get your Spirit of Tasmania booking done early, if you leave your booking to the last minute, you may not get a spot. Please call 13 20 10.

Check out facilities on the [Spirit of Tasmania](#) on the internet. You can buy your meals on board. Some pack a few snacks, but do ensure you dispose of left over fresh food thoughtfully on board. Some food items cannot enter Tasmania.<sup>1</sup> If you are the driver, you might like a good night's sleep, if you are taking the overnight crossing, you might have a cabin booked to stay in. Tell the Spirit of Tasmania, when you book and before you board, that you have horses on board so that they have your vehicle and float/truck/gooseneck in the ventilated decks.

Be aware that there are new horse transport regulations and animal welfare and biosecurity requirements that must be met.

[Horses | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania \(nre.tas.gov.au\)](#)

Horses must be single stalled (unless it is a mare and dependent foal.)

Horse vehicles, including 2-horse floats, must have ventilation opening requirements for the 12 hour Bass Strait crossing. For more than 2 horses on a vehicle this is a total vent opening space (in aggregate) of at least 0.5m<sup>2</sup> per horse. Horse floats (containing two or less horses) must have openings for ventilation in the front and rear of the float, each measuring at least 0.4m<sup>2</sup>.

The Spirit of Tasmania may have additional requirements for horse transport that you will receive at the time of booking. Ask them for the Spirit of Tasmania horse declaration, you will need to read and complete this prior to travel, including your vent space measurements.

Make sure your float/truck/gooseneck is safe. Service your vehicle and horse transport well before you even start your Quilty trip. Check over the horse area. Check your dividers/doors/floor/ramp/lights etc are operational and secure.

Make sure your vehicle/float/truck is clean. Wash your float/ truck/vehicle. Sweep off the remnants of horse food off the tray of the ute/truck before you board the Spirit of Tasmania. Be aware that you are about to cross a state border that has Biosecurity requirements when you arrive in Tasmania.

The crossing on Bass Strait, including boarding time, takes about 12 hours. Setting your horse and yourself up for success for this part of the journey. Rest your horse. Get your bigger training ride days out of the way earlier in the week. The day of travel, if you must train, do an easy hour of walking. Load cool horses prior to boarding Spirit of Tasmania. Do not load a hot sweaty horse onto your horse float or horse transport. Give the horse time grazing to allow the horse to have a head down eating posture to allow drainage of the airways. Your horse is going to be standing on the float/truck for a while, back off the hard feed, the day of ferry travel. Hay or grass is sufficient.

Prior to loading your horses, open the ventilation/windows on the truck/float. I like to put a good six to 10 inches of fresh sawdust on the floor of the float or truck to absorb urine and manure, it stops

them slipping. Do not use straw, it cannot be imported into Tasmania. A well hydrated horse travels better and they will need a pee after a few hours on the truck/float, they are more likely to do so, if urine does not splash up back at them because its absorbed into the sawdust. Being able to empty out increases their comfort.

It is up to you if you decide to travel with a hay net or hay bag. Some horses can have no problems with a hay net, some horses can experience a mouthful of hay getting stuck, especially if they eat quickly, are dehydrated or have experienced choke events previously. Some riders arrange feeding and watering before and after travel. Having a hay net on board as you travel can be a risk for a horse getting choke. Not having access to hay conversely can be a risk for gut ulcers. You know your horse best, and your travel routines are your own, and your horses may or may not travel with a fresh hay net of dampened hay, the decision is up to you. Any left-over hay will need to be disposed of once you enter Tasmania at the Biosecurity Tasmania checkpoint as you come off the Spirit of Tasmania.

Check out a map, or google maps, on how to drive in to Corio Quay Road, Geelong from where you are, to board the Spirit. [Getting to Spirit of Tasmania Quay | Spirit of Tasmania](#)

The day you board the Spirit of Tasmania, you will want a short trip into Geelong less than two hours. So arrange your trip to allow camping at a horse friendly facility. The day you head in the board the spirit, give yourself an extra time on anticipated journey time, in case something does not go according to plan. (you get lost, you blow a tyre, there is a build up of traffic depending on your approach).

Have all your float/truck/gooseneck packed clean and ready well before, to give yourself a breather before you load up and go again. I pack an overnight bag ready, when I do the overnight crossing. Once you and the float/truck gooseneck are on the Spirit, you will have to go up to the main passenger decks and are not allowed back down to the horses until they announce you can go back down there once you've arrived at port. Your horse will be in your float/truck/gooseneck and will have no other choice but to wait to you come back.

Secure the float/truck/gooseneck. Open all vents and windows. Your float needs to be escape proof. You might leave the float door open, provided horses cannot escape the float/truck (no one wants to rescue a horse half stuck in a door way, or horses escaped out on the ship deck). You might leave the area above the float ramp open.

Check out: [Traveller's Guide to Tasmanian Biosecurity - What You Can and Can't Bring into Tasmania | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania \(nre.tas.gov.au\)](#)

[Travelling to Tasmania on the Spirit of Tasmania | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania \(nre.tas.gov.au\)](#)

Briefly: no fresh fruit or vegetables, no fish, no crustaceans, no honey or honeycomb, no weeds or weed seeds.

If you decide, you have to offer feed on the ferry crossing, horse food, beyond the one feed for the crossing, is not allowed to be imported, as it is a risk for weed seeds. There should be no feed remnant left from the crossing feed, or you will have dispose of it. Some horse owners leave feeding till after I have arrived and purchased feed, or given the horses the opportunity of grass to pick at my first stop after getting through the quarantine/biosecurity station.

#### **Importing feed into Tasmania:**

The simplest answer to this is, you can't!

It will be much easier for you to research some horse feed suppliers close to Devonport, work out in advance what feed you need while in Tasmania, order and collect it once you are here (pick it up on the way to your next camp)

### So what to do about horse food?

Work out what you need while you are in Tasmania, and pre order your horse feed. There are at many options for horse feed suppliers within easy reach of the Spirit of Tasmania in Devonport. There are also feed suppliers in near the Quilty Ride base.

Tas Pumps and Pipes Carolyn Foley – Jones

[www.taspumpsandpipes.com](http://www.taspumpsandpipes.com)

39 High Street Sheffield

Phone: 64911797

Email: [taspumpsandpipes@gmail.com](mailto:taspumpsandpipes@gmail.com)

[Facebook](#)

Yolla Co-Op

[www.yollacoop.com.au](http://www.yollacoop.com.au)

243 Gilbert Street, Latrobe Tasmania 7307

Phone: (03) 6426 1678

Email: [Admin@yollaproducers.com.au](mailto:Admin@yollaproducers.com.au)

[Facebook](#)

Horses n More

unit 5/8 luck street , Spreyton, TAS, Australia, Tasmania

Phone: (03) 6427 3173

Email: [rcornish1986@gmail.com](mailto:rcornish1986@gmail.com)

Saddleworld Devonport

[www.saddleworlddevonport.com.au](http://www.saddleworlddevonport.com.au)

1 Ferguson Drive, Quoiba, Tasmania 7310

Phone: 03 6424 7614

Email: [devonport@saddleworld.com.au](mailto:devonport@saddleworld.com.au)

[Facebook](#)

Animal Foodbarn – Warehouse traders

76-80 MERSEY MAIN ROAD, Spreyton Tasmania 7310

Phone: (03) 6427 2996

Email: [Warehousetraders1@bigpond.com](mailto:Warehousetraders1@bigpond.com)

[Facebook](#)

Elders Spreyton

[Elders Devonport](#)

7 Bay Dr, Quoiba TAS 7310

Phone: (03) 6427 4500

Alan Geddes Latrobe Saddler

15 BAY DRIVE, Quoiba Tasmania 7310

Phone: 0418 467 655

[Facebook](#)

Check out the 2025 Quilty facebook page or the white pages or google for other local horse feed suppliers.

**Significant effort** is required to ensure fodder and feed meets Tasmania's import regulations. It is important to note that there are significant penalties for breaching the Biosecurity Act 2019.

If you insist on importing special horse pellets you have work to do:

Importing **pellets** into Tasmania.

Processed/pelletised grain, is classed as Grade 4(TF4) and will require the following:

Any feed you wish to bring in, in terms of feed or pellets, will need to be assessed prior to arrival. This will need to be done in plenty of time, to allow for assessment by our experts.

The recommendation is to **allow at least 3 months for assessment**. You will need to submit the brand, varieties, or name of the particular feed they wish to bring. Many of the mainland suppliers do particular lot runs for Tasmania, so they can meet our weed, restricted, and GMO seed etc. requirements. Further information (may be required for specialised feeds) and this may include production processes, cooking times & temps, any milling and size, ingredient lists and labelling and a picture of the finished product if possible. The first step is to submit a feed import request for assessment to – [marketaccess.biosecurity@nre.tas.gov.au](mailto:marketaccess.biosecurity@nre.tas.gov.au)

TF4 classified grain (meal, pellets etc.) also needs to be assessed as ensuring that no viable product remain in the pellet.

Home made mixes will require a permit and assessment – It is a higher risk product for contamination etc, and I would not recommend bringing or applying, but it is their decision if that want to go down that path.

Riders will need a permit to bring in fodder – I have put the link below for your reference –

[Application for an Individual Permit \(Import of Restricted Matter - Plants, Plant Products and Horticultural Materials\) | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania \(nre.tas.gov.au\)](#)

Stockfeed that is available in Tasmania will have already gone through the assessment process and ultimately this is our preferred option. However, these options are available to riders if they wish to pursue.

The market access number if they wish to talk to Biosecurity Tasmania directly, about horse feed import is – 03 64784138

#### Certification

The following documents must be provided to Biosecurity Tasmania at least 24 hours prior (well in advance is recommended so that you understand the process)

to import and are required for each lot of grain in a consignment. A lot is a quantity of a single type of grain, identifiable by reference to a line of bags, sacks, storage bins, or silo, container or hold number.

(i) A Notice of Intention to Import Grain/Seed (this can be found on our website) and

(ii) A declaration or certificate stating the lot of grain to which it applies was: packed in new, clean, empty bags

Also a new requirement has been added to the manual:

Tasmanian Feed Grain Grade 4 (TF4) destined for Level 1, 2 or 3 Premises:

(ii) Must be processed in a manner approved by Biosecurity Tasmania

Please contact Rachael Carden from Market access [biosecurity.marketaccess@nre.tas.gov.au](mailto:biosecurity.marketaccess@nre.tas.gov.au) in advance about this as they will be the branch approving the process.

Link to the manual – Page 109 Import requirement 30

<https://nre.tas.gov.au/documents/Plant%20Biosecurity%20Manual%20Tasmania.pdf>

**Be aware of horse welfare requirements crossing Bass Strait.** There is a horse specific section in [Land transport of Livestock](#), and in the [Animal Welfare Guidelines - Transport of Livestock Across Bass Strait](#), [Animal welfare Transport of Livestock Regulations 2023](#)

Be aware of 2025 Tom Quilty Gold Cup event biosecurity requirements. Check out [TQ2025 facebook](#) page for up to date information.

Once you have arrived in Tasmania (YAY!), come off the Spirit of Tasmania and passed through the Biosecurity Tasmania area, you might have planned ahead for a pit stop for your horse and yourself. You might do a feed pick up. Again planning is key here, you might pick a quiet area well away from traffic that has a good pick of grass, where you can offer them some water to drink, and where your horse can stretch their legs, before you load up to go to your next overnight camp.

Enjoy your trip. Most of it is in the planning beforehand. Check out websites well before hand, and know and arrange what you need and you shouldn't have too many dramas.

