



## JOURNEY TO THE OLYMPICS

Horses are considered athletes in the Olympics as the riders are. The work done by the rider during the course is equivalent to the work done by the horse. Both of them get the Gold, Silver or Bronze medal. If one of them is tired or it happens to be not his day both of them will suffer, they both have to be healthy and fit because show jumping, dressage, and eventing are all about team work. A kind of team work that does not exist in any other sport, it is the team work of two different species, Horses and Humans.

Just as these Olympic riders need to have comfort throughout the journey in the plane to Rio to calm down from stress, also the horses need the exact same comfort during that flight. From some countries the journey in the plane could take up to 12 hours. So riders have to be comfortable and they will try to travel in business class. Horses also have their own

business class on the plane. Horses are loaded into stalls at ground level, then levered up into the plane. Normal stalls accommodate three horses, but as these are Olympians, they fly the same as the business class, two horses per stall.

Most people think a lot about the food that would be served to them during the flight, meat or chicken, rice or macaroni, what desert will get to be served to them? As Olympic horses stay in “business class” they get special hay, “haylage”. It is a kind of hay with an extra amount of moisture than normal hay. It is better than normal hay so that the horses could remain hydrated during the long journey. To combat dehydration which is the main problem for horses during the trip they do not only eat “haylage” they also drink a lot of water and they are kept in a temperature controlled atmosphere.



As humans are allowed a backpack on the plane, each horse is allowed 1 large hay net, water and his or her own personal bucket, and a small overnight bag with a spare head collar and rug, in case it gets chilly. Each groom has an allocated baggage allowance, by weight. However this includes the horse itself, plus water, hay, 30kg shavings as bedding, water buckets, feed buckets, tack bags (for saddles and bridles), rugs and any spare equipment. Horses, like people, like to travel in comfort. Some may wear a light rug but generally they wear as little as possible to stay cool and comfortable. Most will wear protective leg gear.

Every horse has a passport. In the United States a horse passport would cost you \$300 for international travel and \$50 to travel in the States. Make sure you like your horse's name because a name change will run you \$1,000!

**Did you know that stallions stay in the front of the plane so they do not get distracted by the mares during the flight? *True.***

Another interesting fact is that unlike humans, horses have their special take-offs and landings. Pilots take longer and more gradual take-offs so the horses don't get spooky. They also take a longer and more gradual landings so the horses do not feel the difference. As Liz Brown, a British Team Eventing vet said, "The pilots will control a more gradual take off and a slower landing to a typical flight. When you're on a passenger plane you'll experience a positive landing where they brake quite hard, but with horses they do a longer landing... so they don't feel that sudden deceleration." 

**One more interesting fact: *Horses do not get jet lag as we humans do, so they just walk out of the plane like nothing happened. Oh, to be a horse on a long-haul international flight!***