

# Flying trade



## Emer Bermingham went behind the scenes at Dublin Airport with Equine International Shipping

**W**ITH many horses either being sold or competing in various countries across the world, transport of horses by air has become a common practice. Air travel is considered one of the quickest modes of transport so it is logical that horses should also be transported in this way. However, air journeys involve detailed planning and a considerable amount of expertise in this particular area. In Ireland there are just a handful of companies specialising in transporting horses, one such is Equine International Shipping.

Owned by Andrea O'Brien and Raymond Carroll and based in Co Meath, EIS has been in operation since 2005. Both partners bring a wealth of experience to their business and take a hands-on approach. With their in-depth knowledge of international quarantine requirements and air freight, they are able to give the best service on import/export transport preparation of animals, as well as understanding the travel needs of competition horses. Both Andrea and Raymond are ATA registered equine attendants and hold an NPCTC certificate so they regularly fly with the horses. Their motto is: "If there is a flight there, we can get them there."

Both Andrea and Raymond have a vast amount of experience in handling horses, having worked in the industry prior to starting their business. Raymond spent many years working in the financial services before making the decision to leave a high-powered position to follow his dream job. In 1998 he travelled to Florida to take up a position with Candice King and while working there, he had the opportunity to further

develop his knowledge of horses, focusing particularly on their fitness, nutrition and general well-being for competition.

Similarly Andrea has extensive equine knowledge having worked as head travelling groom for Rene Amstutz. It was during her time with Amstutz that she got the opportunity to travel to many of the top international shows throughout Europe. She was also head groom for the successful Kinmarlin Stables in Georgetown, Ontario, and later worked for Kim Kirton. Andrea's experience with equine travel came when she took up the position as shipping administrator with Peden Equine Transport.

EIS offer a complete service; they are there from the start of the journey right through to landing. "Our attitude to the business has been and will continue to take a hands-on approach. Myself and Andrea are the only employees of the company, therefore, we are involved in every aspect of our business. We are extremely passionate, enthusiastic and proud of our business," says Raymond.

"Customer service is very important to us and we keep our clients updated on the journey and how the animal is travelling. One of us is always at the airport to ensure that everything goes to plan and because of our knowledge of the complete process, we can answer most questions from the airport staff or the department veterinary surgeons. We aim to simplify the shipping process and alleviate stress for owners by providing a comprehensive service," adds Raymond.

### SHIPPING

The journey for shipping an animal begins long before they reach the airport. The process of shipping a horse is far from simple, as I learnt from my day with EIS.

As it is quite expensive to transport horses and with price fluctuations in air travel, the team at EIS work hard to get the best possible quote for their client. Generally, all the horses will co-load, the only situation where they don't is if the horse is a bad traveller or if the client would simply just like to give them more room.

Once the agreement is made and the flights are booked, then the trail of paperwork and regulations begins and to the inexperienced eye, it all looks very daunting. Depending on the animal's destination, bloods need to be tested to ensure that all the necessary pre-export testing and health paperwork is carried out. The EIS team liaise



Andrea O'Brien loading a horse at Dublin Airport



Global shipping of horses is the expertise of EIS business partners Andrea O'Brien and Raymond Carroll

with the client's veterinary surgeon and provide them with a testing schedule and follow up with them to ensure that all testing is carried out as per the health certificate requirements.

For horses exiting or entering the EU, they will arrange all import/export customs documentation. On landing, it is necessary to book quarantine facilities and make sure that an agent is on the other side to take responsibility for the animal. EIS recommend that all horses are insured prior to shipping and while they are not a broker, they can recommend an insurance broker to suit clients' needs.

Apart from looking after the animal's paperwork, visas must be organised for the flying grooms. With EIS their policy is always to send one ATA approved groom. "We have an excellent team of grooms which we use, they have plenty of experience and the most important thing is they have the ability to react quickly to any situation and genuinely care about the animals," said Andrea.

The horses were travelling

out of Dublin Airport at 6pm but had arrived at the airport at 2pm to ensure that all passports were checked and that the Department of Agriculture veterinary surgeon was satisfied with all the paperwork. They were travelling with Fed Ex to New York with a two hour stop-over in Stansted. In the main terminal, all grooms were put through the usual security checks before being escorted out to the holding area.

Five horses were being shipped out, a mixture of show jumpers and eventers. Despite the noise of the planes landing, they all seemed to cope well. On the day, flying grooms Lucy Allen and Desmond Dully were there to familiarise themselves with the horses and asking the lorry drivers how the horses travelled.

"If we know a horse is a bad loader or doesn't travel well, we can deal with this; pre-warned is pre-armed. Most horses, once they are beside another horse in the container, will travel well. I am responsible for the horse, checking that it is comfortable and showing no signs of

distress. As the aircraft itself is air conditioned, the temperature can be adjusted to keep the horses comfortable. The pilots are generally very understanding which always helps. We feed the horse's haylage and ensure that they have plenty of water. In general once we are in the air, the horses are quite happy," said Lucy.

At first glance, I must admit that the purpose-built container looked on the small side but it was later explained that when travelling, the horses needed to be secure. A triple stall (a pallet taking three horses) is the most economical way for the horses to travel. All of the pallets are

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the same size, but the partitions are adjustable so you can fly one horse in a pallet by itself or fly two horses and adjust the partitions so that each horse has a stall and a half. Obviously the latter options are more expensive. EIS always check with the owner on the initial telephone call and ask how the horse travels; the answer will determine the amount of space that the horse will require.

Once the horses are loaded, either Andrea or Raymond will be there to check that everything is checked and performed in accordance with IATA (International Air Transport Association) standards and regulations. Texts are then sent to the clients to let them know that their animal was loaded and ready to go, in some cases even pictures are required as in the case of Suzy, whose owners had set up a Twitter account to follow her journey.

### WEIGHT

The next part of the journey is to the plane on the tarmac. Each container is weighed so the weigh master knows exactly where to place the load. On the journey over, the horses remained perfectly calm and didn't seem in any way perturbed by their new experience.

Once all the containers were ready, they were loaded on the plane and the next stage of the journey began. Apart from looking after the horses, it is also the groom's job to relay all information back to Andrea and Raymond so they can pass this information on to the clients and the agent waiting on the other side.

As well as shipping horses, EIS also act as agents for other companies, ensuring that horses arrive safely into Ireland. The Dublin Horse Show is also a very busy time for them as they are contracted to ensure that the visiting teams arrive safely. Again it is a trail of paperwork, liaising with the various international federations and riders.

The amount of logistics involved in the shipping of these animals is huge and if any part of the paperwork is not right, the horses will not travel. There is a huge responsibility on the whole team, from the minute they take on the job to the time the horse reaches its destination. There is endless amount of paperwork and organisation involved in the process but the team at EIS are well able to take it all in their stride.

### TROYTOWN EQUINE HOSPITAL SEMINAR

TRAINING FOR SOUNDNESS IN COMPETITION HORSES

24<sup>TH</sup> May 2011 in the Osprey Hotel, Naas, Co Kildare at 7pm

SPEAKERS: Niall Quirke - Trainer, Sean Wall - Equine Chiropractor (Avca Certified), Geoff Curran - Event Rider, Warren Schofield - Veterinary Surgeon

SPONSORS: AUDEVARD

This very exciting meeting will focus on training methods to minimise injuries and optimise performance from your horse. Followed by a talk on diagnosis, treatment and management of horses with injuries. A chiropractic approach to back therapy will be discussed also. Please note there is no charge for this talk but all attendees are required to register by email to [info@troytown.ie](mailto:info@troytown.ie)