

TRAIL GEAR

Gooseneck Trailer

Featherlite Trailers aims to accommodate your potential need to economize while maintaining the company's durable, all-aluminum construction and offering luxury options with its Model 8533 gooseneck trailer. The slant-load trailer comes in two-, three-, and four-horse lengths. It measures 6 feet, 7 inches wide; inside height is 7 feet. Slant stall dividers separate the 42-inch-wide stalls. Load horses through the double rear doors; three- and four-horse models feature a side-door exit. A 46-inch, short-wall dressing room comes standard, or you can opt for small, yet fully appointed, living quarters.

Cost: From \$18,404 (with dressing room); from \$27,105 (with living quarters)

Contact: Featherlite Trailers, (800) 800-1230; www.fthr.com.



TRAIL TEST Gentle Spurs & Tough Boots

Description: SpurSuader's "Gentler SpurSuasion" spurs were designed by Linda Hasmatali, a Level 2 Equine Canada sanctioned coach. She designed the spurs to be gentle yet just as effective as a traditional spur, using a rounded edge and large contact area.

To use this type of English-style spur that sits close to your ankle, it's best to have the right boots to keep them in place. Therefore, we tested the spurs on Kestar Boots' Dakota Zip Jodphur Riding Boot. The zipper-front boots are water- and scuff-resistant. Strong elastic gores provide a precise, comfortable fit. The boots' strong spur rest helps keep English-style spurs in place. (Note that Kestar makes coordinating half chaps for trail riding.)

The test: *The Trail Rider* contributor Heidi Nyland, a therapeutic riding instructor for NARHA, tested the boots and spurs on a friend's horse, Manassis. "He's a 25-year-old former dressage star who's in great shape and still tops the list as a favorite mount on trail rides," she says.

"Having competed in hunter jumper and dressage events throughout his life,



HEIDI NYLAND PHOTO

Manassis is accustomed to his riders wearing spurs," Nyland notes.

"I first rode while wearing the Kestar boots without the spurs," continues Nyland. "My feet were comfortable and secure in the stirrups. The boots' low-profile soles gave me enough room to position my feet properly and safely in the irons. The boots fit my feet snugly yet comfortably when ordered in my usual dress-shoe size."

"In just the boots, Manassis was obedient, but somewhat sluggish. Then I put on the spurs. As I walked off, I used my natural seat and leg aids to

rhythmically cue him. I let him feel the spurs as my legs alternated and closed against his sides. Without spooking or jarring, he immediately perked up and walked in a showy style.

"At the trot, I found that I didn't have to post then squeeze quite as much as I had without the spurs. Though I continued to wrap my leg and maintain a solid position, I was able to relax my back. Afterward, I could see no sign of where the spurs touched Manassis' sides.

"I think the SpurSuader spurs offer a kind gentle 'prompting' for horses that have too much whoa, as long as riders use them in addition to proper leg cues."

That said, Nyland says she recommends that you introduce any new tool to your horse from the ground. "From the ground, touch your horse with the spur on both sides where your legs will be once you're in the saddle," she says. "This will help you gain confidence and know how your horse will respond."

Cost: \$54.99 (spurs); \$129 (boots).

Contact: SpurSuader, (416) 892-3725; www.spurlander.com; Kestar Boots, (573) 631-1200; www.kestarboots.com.