

IOWA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

2055 Ironwood Court | Ames, IA 50014 | 515-296-2266

Cattle Hauler ICA Fact Sheet | July 2026

Cattle Hauler

A cattle hauler plays a critical role in the health and welfare of the cattle you raise. Proper handling and transportation of cattle can reduce stress and sickness in calves, and lower the risk of bruising and lean color in feedlot cattle. Choosing the right cattle hauler is crucial to protecting your bottom line—ICA wants to provide you with the resources to ensure the transporter you utilize is high quality and the right fit for your operation.

Important Information to Know for Your Search

- Iowa's Weight Limitations
- The Hauler's Licensing and Registration
- Weight Tolerances Granted in Iowa
- Hauler's Equipment Inspections and Reporting
- The Hauler's Qualifications and Certifications
- Where to Find More Information or Help During and After Your Search

Reviewing a Cattle Hauler

Iowa's Weight Limitations

	Single Axle	Tandem Axle	Max GW 5 axle	Max GW 6 axle	Max GW – 7 axle
	Any single axle or axles with <40" spacing.	Two or more axles with centers 40-96".	Axle centers are >96" apart.	Axle centers are >96" apart.	Axle centers are >96" apart.
Non-Primary	20,000	34,000	86,000	90,000	96,000
Primary	20,000	34,000	86,000	90,000	96,000
Interstate	20,000	34,000	80,000	80,000	80,000

Gross weight (GW) is determined by the total number of axles on the vehicle or combination and the distance between the front (first) and rearmost (last) axle.

Non-Primary Highway System: All county and city roads.

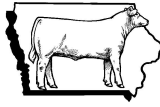
Primary Highway System: All federal and state highways.

Interstate Highway System: All interstate highways: I-29, I-35, I-74, I-80, I-280, I-380 & I-680.

If a federal highway runs concurrently with an interstate, the rules for interstate highway systems take precedence.

Vehicle Registration

If your trucker is from Iowa, and plans to only operate in Iowa, they may purchase vehicle registration plates at the county treasurer's office. If your trucker plans to cross state lines they may need to purchase apportioned registration through the International Registration Plan.



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Tolerance Percentage Allowed only in Iowa

The registration weight tolerances do not apply to the maximum axle weights provided in the wheelbase tables, only to licensed registration weight. Trucks must be registered in Iowa.

Five Percent Weight Tolerance:

All trucks and combinations are allowed to operate in excess of registration weight by up to 5%, but are not allowed to exceed the maximum gross weight listed in the IDOT wheelbase tables.

Twenty-Five Percent Weight Tolerance:

Only trucks or combinations transporting raw agricultural products (i.e. live cattle) are allowed to operate in excess of their registration weight by up to 25%, but are not allowed to exceed the maximum gross weight listed in the wheelbase tables.

Annual inspections

Commercial vehicles must pass an inspection at minimum once every 12 months. Inspection must be completed by a qualified technician and may be performed either in-house or at a commercial facility. Each vehicle in a combination is considered a separate vehicle and must pass inspection individually. Proof of current inspection is recognized by a report or decal and must be carried or displayed on the truck and trailer.

Reporting

Daily Vehicle Inspection Report – At the completion of each work shift, the driver is required to perform a daily vehicle inspection, including a written report for the carrier (Daily Vehicle Inspection Report [DVIR]). Defects discovered must be corrected and certification of repair made on the report; if a defect is discovered, does not affect safe operations, and is not corrected, that decision must be documented.

Hours of Service – Drivers of commercial (FOR HIRE) vehicles are subject to driving time limits.

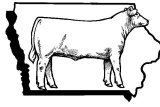
Property carrier hours of service rules:

1. After a 10-hour rest break, a driver shall not drive more than 11 hours.
2. After a 10-hour rest break, a driver shall not drive after 14 consecutive hours of on-duty time.
3. A driver shall not drive after completing 60 hours on-duty time in seven consecutive days, or 70 hours on duty in eight consecutive days.
4. A driver shall not drive after driving for 8 hours without a break of at least ½ hour in length.

Drivers must have an Electronic Logging Device (ELD) that is current to the last change of duty status in their possession when on duty. The logbook must be available for inspection by any law enforcement officer. It is important that drivers have all the above information in a concise and organized manner. Iowa State Patrol's Commercial Vehicle Unit Troopers frown upon poor organization and it may increase inspection times.

Reporting Exemptions

Electronic Logging Devices (ELD's) are not required for drivers who haul live animals or insects, but they must still keep paper records if:



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1. They will be operating beyond a 150 mile radius (air miles) from both the loads originating site and the loads final destination.
 - a. These exemptions are tied to seasonality (Planting and Harvest) in Iowa, the seasons have been expanded to Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, to allow the exemption to be year round.
 - b. Some states have not done this**—*check the planned route and look for the official planting and harvest seasons for those states.*
 - c. When operating beyond the exempt radiuses, the first and last 150 air miles do not need to be recorded, but once outside of those radiuses, hour rules and logging are mandatory.
2. If live animals are on the truck, the 8 hour rule (#4 above) is exempted.

Cattle Hauler Credentials

Beef Quality Assurance Transportation Certification: *Professional Driver* – BQAT

Beef Quality Assurance Transportation Certification: *Farmer and Rancher* – BQAT

For more information:

Contact the Iowa State Patrol Commercial Motor Vehicle Unit: +1 (515) 725-1086

Iowa DOT - *Iowa Truck Information Guide* (July 2025-July 2026)