

ROUTE 66 Q&A: RV Performance

By Jim Fogdall, President, Brad Miller and Tom Berns, Sales Consultants, Fogdall RV, a ROUTE 66 RV Network dealership in Cedar Falls, Iowa

Q&A EXPERT ADVICE ON RV ENCLOSURES, WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION AND WATER HEATERS

Q. We are new to RVing and are looking to purchase our first trailer or fifth wheel. We are a little confused about whether the undercarriage should be open or enclosed and not sure what would be the best choice for us. Please advise us on the pros and cons of both.

A. Underbelly enclosures have become more popular and more readily available on new RVs. They are also designed to be much more serviceable, with the feature of allowing removal of a 4' x 6' section to access things like waste tanks and dump valves. You have already undoubtedly found that almost all of the mid- to upper-priced fifth-wheels have enclosed bellies. I personally would prefer the enclosed option because of the aerodynamics and insulation. We feel that the

only disadvantage is the serviceability — especially if a manufacturer is still using roll aluminum or sheet metal, which makes removal and neat replacement difficult. Look for the vacuum-formed panels that make up the whole enclosure and can be easily removed individually. —Tom Berns, sales consultant

Q. We have four Honda 350 Ranchers and plan to get a toy hauler trailer. Having 2,000 pounds in the rear of a trailer makes one wonder what that's going to do to the trailering properties as we run down the highway. We need to choose between the fifth-wheel or bumper pull. On the one hand, I would like having the space of my 6.5-foot truck bed for firewood, etc. . . But if the fifth-wheel should

trailer better with Hondas in the tail end, then the fifth-wheel would be worth having. What's your professional opinion on this?

A. You are right to be concerned about weight distribution and hitch weight in a toy hauler. A "ramp" travel trailer might have a carrying capacity of 4,500 pounds, but an unloaded hitch weight of only 1,000 pounds. The positioning of the load is critical so that you don't reduce the loaded hitch weight to below 10 percent of the gross vehicle weight. Larger fifth-wheels will very likely show a similar carrying capacity, but start with a much heavier pin weight (e.g., 2,000 to 2,700 pounds) so that weight distribution is easier to adjust and the towing stability is not as easily jeopardized. Any ROUTE 66 dealer should be happy to help you match your cargo to the right toy hauler. —Brad Miller, sales consultant

Q. We have a 38-foot Winnebago and the hot water heater will not give hot water from the faucets, even though the tank is full of hot water. When we go outside and run off 2 gallons of water from it, we can then get hot water. It is one that also heats from the engine while going down the road. Can you give us any reason why it might be doing this?

A. Assuming that you have had normal water heater service for this particular motorhome previously, I would check the position of the winterizing water heater bypass valve(s), which should be fully rotated to the "normal" position. Most Winnebago products locate those valves adjacent to the water heater in an outside basement compartment. If the valve is in the proper position, then the "check valve" that works in conjunction with the single lever winterizing valve is defective and needs to be replaced. —Jim Fogdall, president

ROUTE 66 RV Network dealer service managers share knowledgeable opinions in this column, but their advice is not intended to supersede specific recommendations from manufacturers.

Have a question about RV maintenance or performance? Send it to: Scenic Route Q/A, Cygnus Business Media, 1233 Janesville Ave., Fort Atkinson, WI 53538. Or, e-mail your question to: scenicroute@cygnusb2b.com.

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