

Mule immobiliser

Caravan Magazine digs in against caravan theft and gets **Matt Stubbs** to fit a Mule anti-theft device, a stubborn addition to the caravanner's armoury

Data panel

Product **Mule Security Systems Ltd.**
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Cost

Weight The literature states 11.5kg approx. On my bathroom scales it weighed 13kg.

Position Ideally the Mule fits immediately adjacent to the chassis below the doorway of the van, but other suitable positions include under seat and bunks. Whatever position you choose, it is important to allow for the radial movement of the steady winder which is used to lower and retract the unit. If the doorway is carpeted the carpet will have to be removed to enable the top plate to be fitted

Fitting Fairly straightforward, but a second pair of hands is an advantage at times.

Tools A 25mm (un) dia drill bit; a brace; pilot drill; hand power drill; power jigsaw or padsaw; power or hand file, 22mm (7/8in) open-ended spanner, screwdrivers, jack.

Plus Silicone mastic – optional.



1 The Mule unit comprises: the main assembly, lock block and keys, blanking cap, top plate two 12mm x 90mm long coachbolts; two 12mm flat washers; two 12mm nuts, two 12mm shear nuts, two underfloor upper plates, underfloor load spreader plate, a sachet of grease and a window sticker.



2 The first job is to locate the position of the chassis member by drilling a small hole up through the floor immediately adjacent to the inside of the chassis. In the illustration wire has been used to help identify the exit hole.



3 Place the top plate with the letter F facing forwards, in position so that the centre of the square hole is 75mm towards the inside of the caravan from the pilot hole. Use a tape measure to ensure that the plate is parallel to the doorway.



4 Having removed any covering over the floor, use the top plate as a template to mark the positions of the two holes for the coachbolts and the 50mm square hole. Pilot drill the floor and then drill the 25mm holes, and drill and cut the square hole.



5 Having measured the thickness of the floor, fit the coachbolts through the holes in the top plate and run the nuts down them until the measurement from the underside of the plate to the washer is 2mm less than the floor thickness.



6 Carefully pass the coachbolts down through the floor and use a power file if necessary to open up the 50mm square hole to size. There is sufficient free play available to enable you to adjust the position of the top plate slightly.

Testers Opinion

Having fitted the Mule, Matt Stubbs gives his personal verdict
Make no mistake about it, the Mule is the best caravan anti-theft device I've come across.

In my opinion – providing you can fit it to your caravan – it makes the wheelclamp redundant. The reason I've qualified the last



7 The underfloor upper plates should now be fitted between the floor and the chassis. Grease the screw and spindles of the Mule, then wind the leg down to about 40 degrees to the horizontal. Place the load spreader plate in position and use a jack to position the unit.



8 Use an open-ended spanner to tighten the shear nuts. Once the nuts are reasonably tight, use the winder to advance and retract the leg to ensure it clears the chassis. Finally, tighten the nuts until their hexagon heads shear off.



9 Replace the mat well, or other floor covering, and push a sharp knife down through the mat or floor covering as near to the centre of the square hole as possible – and then cut outwards to the edge to make an opening for the lock block.



10 Fit the lock block in position and check that it functions correctly. Although the block will fit in a number of positions, it can only be locked with the latch aligned to the hole in the Mule's rectangular barrel.



11 In use, the blanking cap fits into the hole above the lock block. The hole in the cap is not intended to align with the radial lock in the lock block. It is a finger hole to make it easier to remove the cap.

12 The final job is to use the steady winder to check that the Mule can be advanced and retracted without difficulty. In the down position, the leg exerts a force of up to 150kg – sufficient to prevent the caravan being moved.



13 With the mat or floor covering replaced in position there is nothing to see of the Mule. But you have just fitted what is – arguably – the best anti-theft device available.

remark is that the Mule can't be fitted to a caravan that has its door behind the axle and which also has an underfloor spare wheel carrier of the Al-Ko type. In such cases, the Mule would probably have to be fitted under a seat.

The main advantages of the Mule is that it is permanently fitted to the caravan and, short of cutting the floor, no one is going to remove it. The downward force it exerts is such that any attempt to move the caravan will simply result in the Mule digging in.

Although the Mule doesn't attach to the chassis, I was told that Al-Ko might consider the chassis warranty invalid if the unit did cause damage. However, when I checked with Caravan Guard, the insurance company confirmed it would rather pay for the repair of a chassis and/or floor, than pay out for a new caravan. Therefore, I had no hesitation in fitting the unit.

Although I am convinced of the Mule's anti-theft qualities, I do have strong reservations about the

current fitting instructions and the anti-corrosion treatment.

I followed the instructions to the letter...and doubled the length of time it took to do the job as a result! The instructions stated that I should use the top plate to mark the holes. What I should have done was to use the load spreader plate. This would have meant placing the plate on the underside of the floor adjacent to the chassis in a position relative to the chassis location pilot hole.

I could then have pilot drilled all the holes up through the floor before opening them up by drilling down through the floor. As it was, I had to spend time gradually making the holes larger with a power file.

I also had problems with the shear nuts. They wouldn't shear. After I contacted the company, it discovered that it had been supplied with a bad batch. The nuts should have been capable of being sheared using one-arm pressure on an open ended spanner.

My final criticism concerns the anti-corrosion plating. I am prepared to acknowledge that the Mule will never rust away during the life of the caravan. But the plating is extremely poor and in my opinion ruins an otherwise superb product.

By the time this feature appears, new instructions, with illustrations, will be available. The problems with the shear nuts should also be a thing of the past. Which only leaves the plating which, hopefully, the company will take steps to improve.

All the criticisms I have made are relatively minor and do not detract from a superb product.