

Free training tips from Jeanette = Show jumping

If you have a jumping problem contact Jeanette www.jeanettegarrett.co.nz

This month I have a question from Sarah of Masterton. Thank you for your question Sarah.

Sarah's question is "My horse gets excited and rushes at the fences making changes of direction and turns difficult during our show jumping rounds. He often knocks down several rails. How can I slow him down? Would a stronger bit with a 'curb chain' help? He is in an 'eggbutt' snaffle with a running martingale at present.

Sarah's problem is not uncommon. Let's be clear as to why the horse is rushing. Is the horse excited and keen, or anxious and anticipating what will happen over the fence, or just using his natural instinct to run from pain or discomfort.

Without seeing Sarah and her horse jumping it can be difficult to assess the real problem – Sarah I do have a distance training option available, see this website 'Services' page. You could send me a DVD or Video of you and your horse jumping. I can then give you feedback and advice.

Firstly I would advise you to look at yourself to check if you are holding onto or trying to pull on the horse's mouth on the approach and to check your balance on the approach and during the jump. Pulling on the approach and losing balance will cause the horse to 'hollow' his back, raise his head and therefore be forced to jump in a very difficult way, using speed and momentum to clear the fence. If the horse is too fast it does not give the horse time to use his natural spring to clear the fence and this will often be the cause of knocking rails down.

Practice your jumping position when out riding or when working at home in the paddock without jumps. Your stirrups need to be shorter than for riding on the flat with you more forward and weight out of the saddle. Your lower leg needs to be secure with your weight down into your heel.

The Horse and Pony Magazine has some excellent articles on show jumping position and horses' style by Dale Perderson. His comments about the photos are excellent and much can be learned from them.

So... that is your first job, look at yourself to see if you are the cause or some of the cause of the problem. After all if you do not like the reaction you get from your horse you need to change what you do to get a better one!!

Things to try at home: - work on your horse's rhythm, particularly in canter when out riding and around fences in the paddock. Put up a low course with plenty of room between the fences, some with trot poles in front of the fences others without. Spend some time working around the fences until the horse is calm in trot. Ride into the approach of a fence and turn away if your horse starts to rush or walk onto the approach line and allow the horse to trot the last few strides. Use your voice, praise him and pat him to show him your approval if he begins to go slightly slower. This will give him the idea that he is giving you what you want.

The key thing to focus on is to encourage your horse to use his natural 'spring' and not speed and momentum to clear the fence. A small course as mentioned above or a simple jump exercise will be better at this stage. Avoid several jumps in a 'grid' (jumps in a row) as this can make the horse rush even more. Once he is calmer and your balance has improved you can then introduce grid work. This will take time and patience but very worth while!!

A stronger bit with a curb chain? I am not against horses wearing a stronger bit for more exciting work, cross country, fast work, jumping etc. However in this case I would want to be sure the rider was in good balance and harmony with the horse before thinking about introducing this. Taking a calm and logical approach will in time give the result you want.

Try to find a local **Qualified** coach to help you. Registered coaches are listed on the NZ Equestrian Federation web site.

Thank you for sharing your problem with us, 'go well' Sarah and please let me know how you progress.

Cheers

Jeanette