



Worrying trend of young horses with a huge jump

Exaggerated techniques shown in some dealers' and breeders' sale videos could mean bad practices

SPORT horse breeders have spoken out against a disturbing trend for sales videos and photos of jumping with exaggerated or extreme techniques.

Reputable dealers have called out businesses which may use questionable methods to produce these performances in three- and four-year-olds, saying they have a detrimental impact on the industry and horses' wellbeing.

"Social media has brought up a generation of young dealers who sell easily from these flash videos — it's not only hurt my business, I'm against it because of the cruelty," said Caroline Phillips, of Stud UK Euro in Kent.

Shirley Light from Brendon Stud, West Sussex, agreed: "It makes a really nice, naturally good horse look ordinary," she told *H&H*. "It can't be good for their front legs landing like that and as for their brains, it must fry them. The sad thing is that the uneducated still buy them; someone is likely to take a chance as it must be a talented horse to be able to get that high."

Shirley believes "laziness" in buyers has helped fuel the trend.

"People buy more and more off video; these days they won't



A good back end is one thing but exaggerated techniques may not be such a bonus

By SARAH RADFORD

drive three hours to try a horse. Why not? It's nice to have a video so you know what you're going to look at but you can't beat seeing them in the flesh," she said.

Jenny Thompson of Vecthom Sporthorses said her business is based on buying and selling unbroken horses, but unscrupulous dealers treat this market a "get out of jail free card".

"The whole reason for buying a young horse was that no one had messed with it; you knew what you were getting," she said. "Now people are nervous — you can't tell what the horse's natural talent was before it was 'set up'.

"Sales have slowed as people are going to these places and it's only when they get stung that they come back to me. They say they're taking a horse to its first age class and it wouldn't go over the first fence, it was a gibbering wreck and they have no comeback — it's not like buying a ridden horse."

Cruel and banned practices are thought to be behind some exaggerated jumping techniques.

Rapping, electric shocks and lasers can all be employed.

"These practices want outing," said Devon dealer Mark Bosanko. "It's torture; I'd rather quit and stack shelves in Tesco than do something like that. People shouldn't be able to profit from it."

Caroline added: "I've seen

the mental scarring it causes on horses I've bought, some won't jump a pole afterwards."

While a young horse may jump "green" the first time it sees a filler, a horse who consistently produces an excessively large jump should be a red flag for buyers. Dealers say tension, a mechanical jump, and "handstand" back-end action all suggest unnatural methods.

Showjumper and Billy Stud owner William Funnell also cautioned against horses who seem cheap for their ability.

"You have to ask, knowing it can cost £10,000 to breed and produce a horse to a three-year-old, why has it been imported at a loss with a middle man still able to make a profit?" he asked.



Tack checks are important but should riders be more responsible for safety?

The issue of who's to blame if you fall

Should riders be accountable and responsible for safety in the saddle?

By ELEANOR JONES

A RIDER confused by multiple tack checks in Pony Club competition has raised the issue of accountability and responsibility for one's own safety.

Harriet Ramsay was confused when her young mare Lady Of The Lodge's tack was checked before each phase in the open class of a Pony Club one-day event on 3 June, so she asked the steward why such thoroughness was needed.

"I'm familiar with these checks from competitions over the years, and having the correct hat and body protector, and no jewellery and so on, is very important but after the third time my stirrup leathers were checked, and my young mare had decided to stand long enough with all four hooves on the ground and without the need to see more of the landscape from just her hind legs I asked the steward, perhaps naively, why they were of so much interest," Ms Ramsay told *H&H*.

"The response was: 'Because

if your stitching fails, you lose a stirrup and have an accident, we're responsible and you can sue us."

"It left me wondering where and when accountability for your own safety should start and stop."

Ms Ramsay said she "applauds" the Pony Club, praised the organisation of the event and is "glad it remains a strong foundation for children to base their equestrianism on".

"But I was taught to check stitching while cleaning my tack," she added.

"I think health and safety is going a bit mad; I think as riders, we need to have a more common-sense, pragmatic approach and be accountable for our own actions."

Rosemary Lang of charity the Mark Davies Injured Riders Fund, said she believes that riders should take responsibility for ensuring their tack and all protective equipment is in a good

and safe condition.

"If something fails and you have a bad accident, it has repercussions for everyone, not just yourself," she told *H&H*.

"You take your car for its MOT to make sure it's safe to drive; in the same way you need to check your hat fits properly and make sure your tack's all in good working order."

"It's common sense, really."

NOT THAT SIMPLE

HANNA CAMPBELL of Horse Solicitor said the situation is not as simple as the steward's answer may have suggested, as personal accountability still exists.

"In order to succeed with a claim in negligence you need to establish firstly that a defendant owed you a duty of care, secondly that they breached that duty, thirdly that the breach caused a loss (such as caused injury) and, finally, that the loss was not too remote," she told *H&H*.

Ms Campbell said had there been an accident in Ms Ramsay's case, the injured rider would need to prove that the organisers "owed her a duty to check the suitability/soundness of her tack; that they failed to do that, or failed to do it properly; and that this was the cause of any subsequent accident".

"Whether a claim would be successful or not would depend on the circumstances of the case," she added.

"It would be difficult for an experienced adult to succeed as they would most likely be held responsible for checking their own tack but that might be different for children or more inexperienced riders."

"Event organisers carry out risk assessments and develop rules and codes of practice to control the risks in events. For insurance purposes it benefits them to be overly cautious, so they can say that they had done all that could be done in order to head off potential claims."

No one from the Pony Club was available for comment as *H&H* went to press.

HORSES IN THE NEWS



DENMAN

The National Hunt legend has died, aged 18. The 2008 Cheltenham Gold Cup victor won 14 of his 24 starts under Rules and earned more than £1m. "He was a magic horse," said his former trainer Paul Nicholls.



OVER TO YOU

Fans and owner Jeanette Brakewell gathered to celebrate the star's 30th birthday. Britain's most-medalled event horse was surrounded by supporters for a party, at his home in Staffordshire.



SECOND SUPREME

Jane and Jonathan Clarke's 16-year-old eventer collapsed and died at Bramham, of suspected natural causes. He was 23rd at Badminton with Pippa Funnell before becoming a schoolmaster for Chuffy Clarke.

Equestrians honoured in Queen's birthday list

EVENTER William Fox-Pitt and trainer Lucinda Russell are among the equestrians named in the 2018 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

William was appointed MBE for services to equestrian sport, Lucinda, who trained 2017 Grand National winner One For Arthur, was appointed OBE for services to racing.

"It's a huge honour," William

told *H&H*. "I feel proud to be on a par with the likes of Mary King and Ginny Elliot. I guess if you hang in there and get to my age and stage, something comes off."

William has represented Britain at five Olympic Games, four World and nine European championship teams.

Professor Stuart Reid, chair of Trustees at the Donkey Sanctuary,

was appointed CBE for his contributions to the veterinary profession and higher education, while five more equestrians were awarded British Empire Medals.

Duns racehorse trainer Doreen Calder was recognised for services to equestrianism and Bewickshire; Gina Kitchener, Mid Surrey Pony Club District Commissioner, was recognised

for services to sport in Surrey; and Emma Ford and Charlotte MacDonald for their work with the Riding for the Disabled Association. John Maurice Chambers was recognised for services to equestrian sport.

Eventer Andrew Nicholson was also honoured last week, being appointed Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit. **SR**

Investment in event riders and IT

ONGOING investment in IT and commercial strategy meant British Eventing (BE) reported a £249,649 loss last year, although total income rose by 6.7%.

Earnings from membership and horse season tickets were up by 2.8%, sponsorship and commercial income by 18%.

Blenheim, the only event owned by BE, also had significant

increase in turnover, generating £1,141,515, thanks to the new sponsorship deal with SsangYong and an increase in ticket sales.

The event was able to reinvest, increasing prize money and building cross-country fences.

BE has faced significant costs since initiating a major IT project in 2016. The planned roll-out includes a database; entries,

admin, scoring and results system.

BE said safety costs went up due to BE's ongoing work with analytics company Equiratings.

The organisation said it was continuing to make efforts to keep costs down for competitors.

"We remain focused on maintaining the cost of participating as much as possible," said the directors. **SR**

Pictures by David Miller, Lucy Merrell, Bill Selwyn, Nico Morgan and Helen Revington & Stephen Sparkes