

Cross-country riding – tips for the perfect position

BY JENNY RICHARDSON
BHS&I RIDING INSTRUCTOR

The body position of the rider taking a horse cross country varies considerably from other disciplines. Because you are riding in open country, the horse has ample space to cover the ground and most courses are designed to be ridden in a forward manner, encouraging boldness of horse and rider, who must take obstacles in their stride in undulating terrain.

The ideal cross country riding position, in an established canter, is up and out of the saddle, heels down, with a bend in the knee, perfectly balanced with your weight carried on the ball of your foot in your stirrups. Depending on your normal riding style, you may have to adjust your stirrups up a hole or two. Hands may rest lightly on the neck of the horse in between fences, and you should be looking through your horse's ears in the direction you are going, never dropping your head down, as this will alter your whole body position.

A weighty issue

The weight distribution of the rider in the correct position can help the horse in his task of completing the course neatly, quickly and without error; as you will be in perfect balance with his forward movement, he will be unhindered. Your upper body will help determine pace – the lower and more forward you are positioned, generally encour-

ages more speed, conversely, the more upright you are, the steadier your pace should become. It is important to keep most of your weight down into your heels, which will be the lowest point of your body, causing an anchor like effect and keeping your lower leg firmly in place. Your riding position will alter as you approach the various obstacles around the course, steady- ing a little before each fence, becoming more upright and setting your horse up correctly for his jump. On completion, regain your original cross country position and ride on.

In control

Total control in open country is paramount, and preparation and practise are essential to produce a happy and comfortable combination. If you have never ridden in the cross country position before, you will need someone ex-

perienced to help and give you some hands-on advice. Consider some cross country lessons at one of Scotland's many excellent riding centres, or book a training break at a specialist venue. There are many excellent riding centres in Scotland, including Strathorn Stables in Inverurie, Newtonmore Riding Centre in Newtonmore, Highland Riding Centre in Drumadrochit, The Fountain EC in Aberdeen, and of course Gleneagles in Auchterarder. However, if

you fancy a short training break in Ireland, Castle Leslie Estate is the ideal destination for cross country training, and flights from Scottish airports to local Irish airports can be found for under £70 return. This venue, where Jenny Richardson is Equestrian Centre Business Manager, offers luxurious equestrian riding holidays and training breaks over an extensive XC course.

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The weight distribution of the rider, when in the correct position, helps the horse jump



The rider's position alters as various cross-country obstacles are tackled



The ideal cross country riding position sees the rider's heels down, with a bend in the knee



Emma Douglas and Murphy

Rider case study: Emma Douglas

Inverness-native Emma Douglas is a former event rider and former title holder of the British Eventing Scottish Intro Championship. She says balance is key where cross country position is concerned. "While the centre of balance is found within the inner ear, the muscles and joints contribute to stability as well," she explains. "Having good core strength is fundamental to horse riding, and goes a long way to promote a balanced, stable and effective riding position. Your balance and core strength contributes to the position of your hips, seat-bones and shoulders, and allows you to cope with the horse's variation in pace, its jump, not to mention when they spook,

leap or throw their heads up!" she states. Balance is now ever more important to Emma, as she is a grade two Para dressage rider as a result of L1 spinal injury resulting in incomplete paraplegia. No longer an eventer, she now competes as a grade two rider in Para Dressage, recently coming second in her class at the prestigious LeMieux National Dressage Championships, but says riding is possible, despite such an incapacitation as being paralysed, because of good balance. "Two things allow most able bodied athletes to use their bodies conventionally when taking part in sport; the somatosensory system, which allows us to sense pressure and offers us

'proprioception', which passes sensory messages to the brain; and muscle strength, which provides the body with stability. But actually, the centre of balance is found within the inner ear," she explains. "These receptors, which are part of the vestibular system, work with the eyes to provide vital information to the brain and body. So a disabled athlete can still utilise balance to help them succeed in their chosen sport, even if the body's muscles don't have the strength to maintain exactly the same position as an able bodied athlete," she says. "For example, I personally can't flatten or brace my back on demand, so I have to adapt my riding position to absorb the horse's movement."

LIVESTOCK

THAINSTONE – Island store lambs (1,233) sold to £63 for Suff X from Briarlea, Sullom. Ewe lambs, gimmers, ewes and rams (350) to £100 for Tex X gimmers from Stavanness, Aith. Store lambs: Zwa – South Collafrith, Ollaberry, £62; SuffX – Briarlea, Everland, Feltar, £61; Chv – Sollas, Lochmaddy, £60; Down – Clachan Sands, Lochmaddy, Everland, Niaroo, £59; ChvX – Kirkhoull, Cultivoie, Vemetry, Aith, £57; Cont – Symbister, Whalsay, £57; ContX – Black Point, Gimsay, £55. Ewe lambs: Lley – Tresta, Feltar, £47; Chv – Kirkhoull £45. Gimmers: Tex – Stavanness £100. Ewes: Chv – Ennisfirth, Sullom, £80; Cont – Briarlea, Zwa – South Collafrith £58; ContX – Briarlea £57; Tex – Snarraness, Bridge of Walls, £53.

THAINSTONE – Weaned calf bullocks (439) averaged 243.5p and sold to 297.4p a kg for a pen of four 390kg Lim and £1,340 for a 484kg Lim X all from Achdregnie, Glenlivet. Weaned calf heifers (364) averaged 226.8p and sold to 322.4p a kg for a 366kg Lim X from Fodderletter Farms, Tomintoul, and £1,640 for a 540kg Char from Kennieshilllock, Lhanbryde. Bullocks (356) averaged 224.8p (-2.6p) and sold to 282.5p a kg for a 538kg Lim X from Drunton, Harray and £1,590 for a pair of 706kg Char X from South Croft, Cornhill.

Heifers (467) averaged 220.9p (+19.1p) and sold to 324.5p a kg for a pen of five 376kg Sal from Mains of Callander, Crieff, and £1,580 for a 604kg Sim X from Nether Balfour Farms, Drumoak. Bulls (24) averaged 219.3p (+19.1p) and sold to 254.3p a kg for a pen of four 350kg Sim X from Brownhill, New Pittsigo, and £1,000 for a pair of 662kg Sim X from Nether Auchinderran, Keith. In the Marshall sponsored show and sale of weaned and suckled calves, judged by Juan Fettes, Braes of Enzie, Clochan, the overall champion was a 12-month-old 484kg Lim X bullock from D. and R. Durno, Auchorachan, Glenlivet, which sold at £1,350 to A. J. Middel and Sons, Dales, Wardhouse. Reserve champion was a 440kg Lim X heifer from J. Stuart, Belnoe, Glenlivet, which sold for £1,180 to Bradley Robertson, Roebank, Grange.



JUST CHAMPION: Michael Durno, left, is presented with his prizes by sponsor David Marshall for the overall champion, a 12-month-old 484kg Lim X bullock, at a show of weaned and suckled calves at Thainstone Centre, Inverurie, yesterday. See mart report

Weaned calves, a great show for quality, met the fast-paced market. With the majority of store cattle in excess of 500kg averages were very pleasing for consignors. Leading prices per head and kg: Weaned calf bullocks: up to 250kg – Craighall, Cairnie £570, 235.5p; 251-300kg – Bankhead, Durrus, £700, Craigiedaff, Durrus, 244.7p; 301-350kg – Backfield, Drumthitie, £910, 274.1p; 351-400kg – Achdregnie £1,160, 297.4p; 401-450kg – Brucewells, Netherly, Wester Coull, Tairland, £1,170, Auchorachan 287.1p; 451-500kg – Achdregnie £1,340, 276.9p; 501-550kg – Rorandie, Monymusk, £1,320, Midtown of Buchromb, Dufftown, 247p; 551-600kg – Rorandie £1,270, 226p. Weaned calf heifers: up to 250kg – Craighall, Craigiedaff, £570, £51-500kg – Lower Gaich, Fodderletter £690, 233.1p; 301-350kg – Achdregnie £980, 280p; 351-400kg – Fodderletter, Lower Gaich, Grantown, £1,180, Lower Gaich 320.7p; 401-450kg – Lower Gaich £1,200, Achdregnie 291.7p; 451-500kg – Brownhill £940, Auchorachan £1,320. Auchorachan 277.3p; 501-550kg – Kennieshilllock £1,130, 303.7p. Bullocks: up to 250kg – Pittenkerrie, Glasel, £520, 236.4p; 251-300kg – Pittenkerrie £1,200.7p; 301-350kg – Damside, Castletown, £730, 256.5p; 351-400kg – Woodside, Watten, £940, Damside 244.5p; 401-450kg – Woodside £1,070, Jericho, Colpy, 244.2p; 451-

500kg – Pittenkerrie £1,160, Cowford, Blairs, 235.8p; 501-550kg – Brucewells £1,300, Law Farm, Insh, 242.2p; 551-600kg – Brucewells £1,410, Bograixie, Inverurie, 239.2p; 601-650kg – Brucewells, Hillhead of Auchmaecladie, Strichen, £1,430, Brucewells 237.5p; 651-700kg – South Croft, Cornhill, £1,550, 223.4p; 701-750kg – Barnyards, Mintlaw, £1,550, 220.8p; 751-800kg – South Croft 208.2p. Heifers: up to 300kg – Damside £500, 198.4p; 301-350kg – Damside £700, 231.6p; 351-400kg – Mains of Callander, £1,220, Pittenkerrie 237.1p; 401-450kg – Nether Tillygarmond £1,340, 285.1p; 501-550kg – Nether Balfour £1,340, 262.7p; 551-600kg – Nether Balfour £1,460, 264.5p; 601-650kg – Nether Tillygarmond £1,460, Nether Balfour 261.6p; 651-700kg – Gunhill, Pitcaple, £1,430, 216p. Bulls: 251-300kg – Brownhill £510, 192.5p; 301-350kg – Brownhill £690, 250.7p; 351-400kg – Brownhill £940, Beechlea, Allathain, 242.9p. Orkney and Shetland cattle: Bullocks sold to 282.5p a kg and £1,520 for a 538kg Lim from Drunton, Harray. Heifers sold to 252p a kg for a pair of 492kg Char and £1,270 for a 526kg Char both from Langskail, Birsay. The company sold 730 bales of fodder. Barley straw sold to £6.20 a bale to average £4.04. Hay sold at £8 a bale.

BEEF

Abattoirs week ending 4/10/14

| Beef prices p/kg | Scotland | Change | England, Wales | Change |
|------------------|----------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Steers dwt | 372.9 | +2.1 | 341.5 | +1.2 |
| Heifers dwt | 371.5 | +0.2 | 342.4 | -0.4 |
| Young bulls dwt | 352.2 | +6.4 | 320.4 | -4.2 |
| Numbers | | | | |
| Steers | 3,862 | -62 | 10,443 | +124 |
| Heifers | 2,287 | +149 | 5,364 | -25 |
| Young bulls | 417 | -146 | 1,851 | +70 |

Auctions week ending 8/10/14

| Beef prices p/kg | North Scotland | Change | Scotland | Change | England, Wales | Change |
|------------------|----------------|--------|----------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Steers lwt | 208.20 | -6.55 | 205.87 | +11.43 | 177.26 | -1.95 |
| Heifers lwt | 214.90 | +0.76 | 203.21 | -4.08 | 191.69 | -1.45 |
| Young bulls lwt | 149.73 | -4.78 | 156.56 | -2.32 | 173.29 | +4.98 |
| Cull cows | 117.78 | -5.70 | 112.56 | +1.40 | 97.12 | -3.81 |
| Numbers | | | | | | |
| Steers | 106 | +6 | 173 | n/c | 1,352 | -86 |
| Heifers | 136 | +16 | 258 | -15 | 1,859 | +97 |
| Young bulls | 23 | +3 | 31 | -18 | 1,602 | +46 |
| Cull cows | 533 | +75 | 956 | -17 | 3,314 | -177 |

Deadweight cattle week ending 4/10/14

| R4L p/kg | Steers | Heifers | Young bulls |
|---------------|--------|---------|-------------|
| Scotland | 378.9 | 374.9 | 369.1 |
| England/Wales | 352.2 | 348.1 | 333.5 |
| Ireland | 274.2 | 278.8 | - |

Deadweight cull cows week ending 5/10/14

| | 03 p/kg dwt |
|---------|-------------|
| GB | 244.9 |
| Ireland | 234.2 |
| France | 255.5 |

UK DELIVERED PRICES

Rapeseed £ per tonne – prices as at Friday Oct 10 2014

| | Nov 14 | change | Feb 15 | change | May 15 | change |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| UK | 249.50 | +2.50 | 252.50 | +2.50 | 255.50 | +3.00 |
| Scottish Ports | 241.50 | +3.00 | 244.50 | +3.00 | 247.50 | +3.50 |

UK export grains All prices as at: Tuesday Oct 7 2014

| Grain | Month(s) of loading | Price* | Change on previous | Basis |
|-------------|---------------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|
| Feed wheat | Oct | 113.00 | +7.00 | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| | Nov | 113.50 | +6.50 | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| | Dec | 114.50 | +6.50 | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| Feed barley | Feb | 116.50 | +6.00 | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| | - | - | - | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| English | Nov | 111.00 | +2.00 | E.Coast – 2,500t |
| | Dec | 112.00 | n/c | E.Coast – 2,500t |

NOTE: *Representative values

POTATOES

■ The GB weekly average price (free-buy and contract trade) was £119.07/t while the GB weekly free-buy average price was £91.87/t.

■ Contracted stocks continued to dominate packing movement leaving a limited demand for free-buy supplies which were plentiful allowing traders to be very selective. Interest centred on best, bold blemish-free samples moving at unchanged prices.

■ In the bag market, plentiful supplies on offer met a slow, albeit steadier demand from the frying sector with prices virtually unchanged.

■ The Potato Council Grower Panel Lifting Survey estimates that 77,000ha of GB crop was cleared to October 4.

In association with



Crop Weekly

| | Week to Oct 3, 2014 | 2013 | Trend |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------|
| GB Weekly Average | £119.07/t (€151.64/t) | £137.98/t | ▼ |
| The Free-buy Average | £91.87/t (€117.00/t) | £135.20/t | ▼ |

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