

NOTES FOR EVENTING

I have put together some notes for those of you relatively new to eventing, hope you find them useful.

Preparation

The better prepared you are before the day, the less stressful it will be for everyone!

- It is really worthwhile having a check list for everything you need to take with you – even the really obvious things like girth and stirrups, we all know someone who has arrived at an event with the saddle but nothing attached to it!!
- Check your tack meets all the tack rules and you have all your equipment clean and ready to go.
- If your horse/pony uses studs it is well worth cleaning these out the night before and plugging them with specialist stud plugs or some cotton wool soaked in oil (hoof oil or WD40 will do). It's much easier to do them in the peace & quiet at home than at an event!
- Make sure you have plenty of water (both for washing and drinking) and a haynet for the horse.
- Make sure you have water for yourself and also some energy snacks as you may not feel like eating much before you have ridden, but it is really important to keep snacking. Bananas are really good, also cereal bars or even glucose sweets.
- When you have your times, write them on a white board or piece of paper and stick it in the lorry/trailer where everyone with you can see it. Plan your day for course walking, tacking up time, warm-up time, moving between phases (can sometimes be quite spread out) and allow 'emergency time' too for traffic hold-ups, tack malfunctions etc. The more planned you are and the more time you can give yourself the easier it will be. Make sure all your helpers know what your schedule is and what you need them to do, and when.

On the day itself.

Once you arrive, immaculately turned out and with your time plan in mind, head to the secretary to collect your number, pay your start fee if applicable and check your times. If your hat needs tagging (Both BE and PC now use the same Aqua coloured tags) take it to the secretary's with you.

- If walking the XC course before dressage, allow plenty of time – it often takes longer than you think - and don't forget to take a drink with you. It is important to keep hydrated.
- Make sure you know which colour course you are walking and also note any 'black flag fences' or L options.
- It is a really good idea, especially if there isn't an event programme, to use your phone to take pictures of the XC fences as you walk round. You can then use these to go through the course before you ride it and mentally visualise how you are going to ride

it. There are also cross country apps available which are great for working out minute markers and taking fence pictures.

- If walking the XC between phases, make sure you have plenty of time to do that and still be tacked up and warmed up for the next phase.
- If there is an opportunity to walk the SJ course as well, it is a good idea. Often you can see tricky lines better which you might not spot if just watching other people jump it. Many events will post course walk times for SJ so worth checking.
- Keep offering your horse/pony water regularly throughout the day. Haynets also help keep them relaxed, but especially if they are greedy it should be removed about an hour before XC just so they are not galloping on a full stomach!

Dressage

- Allow plenty of time to get to the warm-up and to warm up properly before your test.
- Report to the steward for your arena before you start warming up (they often have number bibs on with the section number showing).
- Find out if they are running to time, which arena you are in, are they starting you with a horn or a bell and which number you are following.
- Remember, gloves are compulsory for dressage
- Remember at eventing dressage you are not allowed to ride the test with a whip, so you need to drop it before you go to the arena if you warm up with one.
- Check your tack and bit are 'dressage legal' – usually a snaffle bit and no martingales allowed.
- If you warm up in boots remember to get a helper to take them off before you go in, ideally well before you actually go to avoid last minute stress!

Showjumping

- When you get to the warm-up report to the collecting ring steward and give them your number.
- Some events run on times given at the start, some (especially where there are a lot of multiple riders) work on declarations on the day.
- Find out how many riders there are to go before you so you can time your warm-up.
- Remember the practise jump will be marked red on one side and white on the other. This could be with different coloured wings or with flags. You MUST jump with red on your right. Jumping a practise fence the wrong way will result in elimination.
- The practise fence may also have coloured tape on it which indicates the highest it can be used for each class. The tape is usually the same colour as the XC jump numbers. Don't have the warm-up jump higher than your tape or again, you will be eliminated.
- Warm up with your usual warm-up routine which you have discussed beforehand with the person who is helping with fences in the warm-up. You may want to have some agreed hand signals so you can let them know you want the fence higher or lower as it is not always easy to stop and talk.
- Try and allow time to watch a couple of riders jump round so you can see how the course is riding.

- Finish your warm up to allow the horse to have a breather before you go in.
- Remember to wait for the bell before you start!

Cross Country!

- Check all leg boots are securely fixed – add insulation tape over Velcro fastenings if you are not sure how secure they are.
- Report to the collecting ring steward on arrival and find out how many there are to go before you.
- Warm up popping a few fences, perhaps doing a couple on an angle to check your lines and straightness.
- Remember you must only jump practise fences which are FLAGGED – jumping any unflagged fence will result in elimination. Red flags must always be on the right.
- The XC starter will count you down when you get to the start box. He will usually give you '1 minute' ; '30 seconds' ; '15 seconds' then '10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1, Go'. You can walk through and around the start box while he is counting you down but you must start from a standstill or v slow walk. Starting from a faster pace or leaving the start box early will incur a penalty.
- If you are held on course because an earlier competitor has had a problem or a fence needs repairing, the fence judge will stand in front of the fence waving a red flag. Pull up slowly and come to a walk. The fence judge will tell you what the problem is and how long they expect you to be held. If it is a long hold they will keep you updated. The most important thing is to keep your horse walking and keep it warm. If the hold up is prolonged you can dismount, put a rug on the horse etc etc but this is rare. The fence judge will let you know when they are ready to re-start and will also tell you where the stop point was where they recorded your stopping time. You can trot and canter your horse round to warm it back up again before restarting, then go back past the point where the time was stopped so that by the time you pass it heading towards the fence you are at full XC speed.
- If the person in front of you is going more slowly and you are catching them up, you can overtake, but make sure you are between fences when you do it. Call loudly to say you are going past and then pass them as quickly as possible. They should let you go and wait for you to get ahead before continuing.
- If you are approaching a fence where the competitor in front of you is having trouble, the fence judge should ask them to give way and let you through. If the fence judge hasn't spotted you approaching, call loudly and they should move the other competitor out of the way.
- If you are eliminated (three refusals at one fence or 4 cumulative refusals for PC or BE up to BE100 level. BE Novice and above it is three cumulative refusals) you must leave the course at a walk. The fence judge should be able to tell you the best route if you are unsure.

When you finish XC

- When you finish the XC pull up slowly and on a straight line. More leg injuries occur from pulling up too fast after XC than during the course! Dismount, run up your stirrups and loosen your girth and also noseband if the horse is blowing hard.

- Walk quietly back to the lorry park and then remove his saddle, but keep him walking until he has stopped blowing.
- Don't allow him to drink if he is still blowing very hard
- Wash him off thoroughly – if it is a hot day you will need to repeat applications of cold water and scrape it off until his temperature has come down. Keep him walking while washing if he is blowing very hard.
- Remove boots and ice legs if used. This is a really good thing to do as it is important to get the temperature of the tendons and ligaments down as quickly as possible. There are a lot of cooler boots on the market – some are better than others, but it is important to keep checking them and take them off as soon as they start to heat up. An alternative is ice packs or ice cube bags with a j-cloth between them and the leg, held in place with a boot.
- When washed off put a cooler rug on if necessary. It is important he doesn't get chilled.
- Remove studs, check legs for any injuries or knocks.
- When he is settled and breathing normally offer a drink and haynet.

After you have finished

- Check the scoreboard to see if you have been placed (and query any scores you are not sure about promptly.)
- Collect your dressage sheet (you may need to wait until the section has finished to get this).
- Don't forget to say thank you to the organisers – most are volunteers and a thank you goes a long way!