

EAST CHESHIRE BRANCH OF THE PONY CLUB SPURS POLICY

Spurs can be a useful riding aid for those who have been taught and know how to use them correctly. However, they can also lead to concern that riders misuse them and this in turn can lead to suggestions of ill-treatment. They can draw negative inferences which reflect badly on the Pony Club in general and the East Cheshire Branch in particular if one of our members is involved.

Spurs may be worn at rallies and other events. However instructors, judges, stewards and other officials will be encouraged to monitor the use of spurs by members and give advice where appropriate. Any misuse of spurs should be reported to a branch official and reported riders will be recorded and monitored.

Members are encouraged to discuss the use of spurs with their instructor and/or one of the EC sport heads. If there is any suggestion of misuse of spurs by any person riding in a Pony Club organised activity, and advice has been given but not heeded, then the rider in question may be asked to withdraw from participation in the activity forthwith and the circumstances reported to the District Commissioner of the organising branch and /or the member's branch.

Where it is brought to the attention of a sport head by any person that a member may be misusing spurs in any way, the sport head will, after proper enquiry, discuss the report with the DC and agree for advice to be given. The welfare of horses and ponies will always be of paramount concern. A Branch record will be maintained of any member who has been advised regarding the possible misuse of spurs and /or asked to leave an activity due to misuse.

General Use

Spurs should be used to emphasise a leg instruction and should be applied in a squeezing or stroking movement and not in a kicking motion. They should not in any way be used to make life easier for the rider but to make the instruction clearer or more positive for the horse. They should not generally or routinely be used by an inexperienced rider. There should be no occasion upon which a rider wears spurs "because I always wear them".

Style of spurs

Sharp spurs are not permitted. Only blunt spurs, without rowels or sharp edges, and spurs that have a smooth rotating ball on the shank may be worn. If the spurs are curved, the curve must be downwards and the shank must point straight to the back and not exceed 4 cm in length. The measurement is taken from the boot to the end of the shank.

Geoff Bell

District Commissioner, East Cheshire Branch of the Pony Club

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SPURS POLICY

Some further information and advice regarding spurs

The need for and correct use of spurs

All riding horses are taught to respond to pressure from the rider's leg, whether it is pressure telling the horse to move over or pressure telling the horse to move faster. Spurs can help enhance and fortify leg pressure cues. But before you strap on a pair of spurs, here are a few suggestions:

1. Keep in mind that not every horse needs to be ridden with spurs. Sensitive and high-energy horses often respond to simple pressure from a rider's calf or heel.
2. Green horses must first comprehend the meaning of leg pressure before they're introduced to the feel of a spur. If you ride a green or very young horse, be sure it moves forward and away from leg pressure before trying spurs.
3. Some horses respond better (more willingly) to a tap from a riding crop than to a nudge from a spur. This is especially true for horses that are already sour or dull from previous riders who used spurs improperly.
4. There's an old horseman's axiom that riders must "earn their spurs." Keep that in mind. If you're wearing spurs, and you inadvertently bump your heel into your horse's ribs or flank, there could be unexpected consequences.
5. When riding with spurs, remember to give your horse the opportunity to respond to more subtle leg cues first. For example, try squeezing with just your calf, and then press with your heel if necessary. Only go to your spur if your horse resists or ignores your leg. If you rely on your spurs for every leg cue, your horse will eventually tune out your requests.
6. To apply pressure with your spurs, turn your toe out slightly. This will angle the end of the spur toward your horse's side. Then bring your lower leg inward. Try to feel when the spur presses into your horse's side; never press more than you need and never "hug" your horse's sides with your spurs. Instead, the moment your horse responds to the spur, relax your leg and bring it back to its original position.
7. You may have to temporarily raise your heel to bring the spur into contact with your horse. But if your leg position is constantly compromised then you may need to switch to a spur with a longer shank (sometimes called the neck of the spur). Long-legged riders on short or narrow-bodied horses often require spurs with longer shanks.
8. Horses typically let the rider know if the spurs are being used incorrectly or too harshly. If your horse bucks or kicks out when you apply leg pressure, seems agitated and tense, or pins his ears and balks, then you probably need to reconsider the spurs you're wearing.

Spurs are not inherently bad. They can help a skilled rider communicate more clearly to a schooled horse. But when used incorrectly they can cause pain and stress to the horse. If you choose to wear spurs, make sure they enhance your riding experience, not ruin it.

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Types of Spurs

Spurs come in a variety of types and styles. How mild or severe they are depends on the type of rowel, which is the wheel on the end of the shank. Here is how spurs rank, from one to five, with one being the mildest and five the most severe.

Types permitted for Pony Club activities:

One: Bumper spurs. Rather than having a shank and rowel, they have a smooth or ridged bar that wraps around the back of the boot heel. They allow the rider to utilize heel pressure without having the traditional shank and rowel.

Two: Spurs that have a smooth, round point or ball at the end of the shank, instead of a rowel.

Types NOT permitted for Pony Club activities:

Three: Spurs with a clover-leaf or rosebud rowel. The tips of the rowel are flat and smooth, rather than pointed.

Four: Spurs with pointed rowels: Available with varying numbers of points, typically from six to 12. The sharper the points, the more severe the rowel.

Five: Any spurs with larger rowels that have multiple, sharp points are considered severe. Rowels with names like “rock grinders” are not recommended for any rider.