



AN ARTICLE BY MAGGIE PATTINSON

START OF THE SEASON

No doubt by now everyone's full of enthusiasm and plans for the forthcoming season – (despite the recent weather) but let's just stop for a minute and look at how we plan, train and prepare.

Firstly no matter what you've done through the winter break/or not it is still important to go back to some basic work

- Walk work – trot work – hills etc etc not forgetting the schooling
- Find your training circuit or circuits and use them – assessing what you're feeling as well as the readable signs of speed and recovery rates – look back at last years records
- Those of you with youngsters starting their 2nd & 3rd seasons should see a marked change in those signs
- All should hopefully find a horse keen to get on with the job
- And if not – take a step back and ask why?

Everyone needs to do some **checks**....

- Vet check – it really is worth it!
- Teeth (or dental technician)
- Vaccinations (FEI now requires every 6 months)
- Blood profile
- General health check

- Physio – don't miss this one, it really is worth getting a good check through of those muscles once they've been back in work a few weeks –you might just pick up something that could cause a problem before it does! It will also give you an opportunity to refresh what stretches and massages are good to do
- Make sure you get your saddle checked once you've done some toning work – no point doing it before toning but don't leave it too late in the training process – leaving it too late will mean the damage has be done!
- Remember if this is a youngster you could well be seeing some big changes – don't ruin your chances by “trying to make it fit” in the long run it will not do either of you any favours.
- General Equipment
- Rugs - Do you have enough and do they do the job?
- Is everything mended and clean for the start
- Spares or everything
- Water carriers & sashes all present and correct
- Map case – intact still?
- Spare shoes
- Transport all up running & legal
- And so the list goes on

But..... we need also to look at what happened last season – let's look at the most common scenarios:

You finished on a high

Good results and or progression last ride completed with you both feeling and looking great – no lumps, bumps or attitude – brilliant. Just assess what it was you did that worked – don't be complacent make sure you keep looking and listening this season – plan your rides and goals carefully always allowing for changes and reversion to Plans B,C and even D! Remember to go through the Checks as discussed previously.

It was ok...

You had some problems/niggles didn't really feel all was well either attitude, or little lumps and bumps, not looking too great after rides? It wasn't ok then!! A holiday might just have done the trick but just beware and make sure you go through each of those "little" problems with a fine tooth comb and comb them out! Was it the saddle? Was it the riding? Does he just not enjoy it? Did it rub? Is his food not right? Or was he simply not fit enough? Take a really good step back and THINK – make sure you start out with no doubts or listen carefully for "niggles". Take extra care with the checks.....and make sure you are able to get him fit for the job you'd like to do

You finished with an injury

Sometimes an easier scenario than the previous – at least you know what happened! But do you know why, maybe not and you never will but just reassess for a moment, should you have stopped at the last vet gate – did she really feel right on that last bit of work before the ride? But whatever the reason you need to be sure that you are both ready to come back – have the CHECKS done! Make sure you do a really thorough training plan with assessment checks built in – don't take short cuts (it's not worth it!) Look at what you're entering carefully according to what the problem was and give yourselves interim goals!

o just a few tips to keep you worrying! And a few more suggestions to keep you on your toes!

- Don't forget yourselves and your crews: get yourselves fit – remember the better you ride the easier for your horse –
- Practice the trot ups and if it's your crew trotting up make sure they practice – if you're going to do that 100 miler you'll need to trot there and back a minimum of 12 times (and further if it's FEI) Everyone (including your horse) needs to know it's "part of the job"!
- We never know it all ... go to some training sessions and enjoy them, Heart Rate Training, Instruction, Map Reading or get an onthehoof personal training plan and trainer
- Have fun make it enjoyable for your horses too

And on that note...I wish you all a fabulously enjoyable and successful season.

