



# THE SPURS TEST

## Learning Objectives

**This Test may only be examined by a C+ Test assessor or above.**

All those involved with this Test should be aware that it involves an important practical ridden element.

Candidates should be aware of the full welfare implications associated with the use of spurs and be able to demonstrate how to ride correctly whilst wearing them.

## Syllabus

- 1** To understand the welfare issues that might occur with spurs. To know that any use of spurs which compromises the well-being of the horse will never be tolerated in The Pony Club. Spurs must only be used to give a more precise leg aid and to facilitate better communication from rider to horse. They are not to make the horse go faster.
- 2** To understand the reasons why a balanced independent position is required and be able to demonstrate that position with a still and stable lower leg.
- 3** To know how to ride with spurs in an educated and empathetic way.
- 4** To understand that not all horses or ponies will be comfortable being ridden in spurs.
- 5** To know the rules regarding spurs in all main Pony Club activities.
- 6** To know the distinct types of spurs, which are permitted and which are not, and why.
- 7** To know how to fit spurs correctly and care for them, removing them when not riding.
- 8** To understand and acknowledge that The Spurs Test does not grant the permanent or irrevocable right to wear spurs. If they are used

inappropriately, incorrectly or over-zealously, **coaches and officials can remove them** and withdraw The Test.

## Teaching Ideas and Resources

- 1** A significant amount of time should be spent discussing this topic. What should come up in your discussion is the fact that spurs can cause bruising – which may not be visible - and damage to horses' sides, which is a clear breach of one of the Five Domains, (freedom from pain). Discuss how horses and ponies may react if they dislike being ridden in spurs.
- 2** Describe how a rider with an unsteady lower leg position may be unaware of when they use the spur, and unaware of the impact of its use. It is likely, therefore, to be used indiscriminately, inappropriately and continuously, whether the pony is obedient at that moment or not. It is unacceptable to punish good behaviour inadvertently through lack of awareness. Riders should be able to demonstrate that they can ride off their lower leg without using the spur and must be aware that an unstable lower leg or a turned out foot position can cause unnecessary use of the spur.
- 3** Show a selection of permitted spurs and discuss them. Permitted spurs are described in the competition Rule Books. Only blunt spurs, without rowels or sharp edges, and spurs that have a smooth rotating ball on the shank, are allowed. If the spurs are curved, the curve must be downwards. It would be useful but not essential for the candidate to be able to identify different types of spurs.
- 4** Parts of the spur:
  - ▶ The 'Yoke' or 'heel band' – is the part of the spur that wraps around the heel of the boot.
  - ▶ The 'Shank' – extends from the back of the yoke and is the part that touches the horse. The measurement of the shank is taken from the back of the boot to the end of the shank. Be aware that the lengths of the shank vary from one sport to another, and that some disciplines do not allow the use of spurs at all.
  - ▶ The 'Rowel': a rotating disc or wheel – illegal.
  - ▶ The 'Ball' – a smooth rotating ball, sometimes attached to the shank depending on the design.
  - ▶ Spur straps to be the same colour as the boot.
- 5** Both correct and incorrectly fitted and adjusted spurs can be

demonstrated and explained. The band should rest so that the shank is horizontal to the ground or pointing downwards, and the buckle of the spur strap should be on the outside, with the loose end of the strap pointing downwards.

- 6 Spurs should not be worn when dismounted, they can cause a trip hazard and are especially dangerous when using a lunge rope. They also cause rub marks on boots.
- 7 Looking after spurs: Spurs should be taken apart; the leather strap can be either saddle soaped or boot polished. The metal parts washed in hot water and buffed with a cloth. They should be stored with the straps off the spurs.

## Recommended Reading

The current edition of The Pony Club Manual.

The Pony Club Guidelines on the Use of Spurs.

The current year's Rule Books for up-to-date spur rules.

## Questions

- 1 What welfare issues might be caused by using spurs?
- 2 Why should a rider have a balanced position before using spurs?
- 3 How might horses or ponies behave if they dislike a rider using spurs?
- 4 Describe a set of spurs that are suitable/unsuitable to be used at Pony Club activities and explain why they're either suitable or unsuitable.
- 5 Name the different parts of a spur.
- 6 Show how to fit a spur correctly.
- 7 Why should you remove your spurs when not riding?
- 8 How should you care for spurs?

## Answers

- 1 The horse/pony could be uncomfortable or in pain from subcutaneous bruising, rubs, swellings, or even cuts. Failing to keep the pony 'Free from Pain'.
- 2 To prevent spurs being used in error, even when the pony is being obedient.
- 3 They might become upset, tense and anxious: head in the air, quarters swinging. Occasionally they refuse to go forwards or they might start rushing, bucking or kicking out at the pressure from the spur.

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- 5** Shank, yoke and rowel/ball.
- 6** Spur to lie horizontally with the shank pointing downwards. Strap adjusted so buckle lies on the outside of the foot with the strap pointing down.
- 7** They may become a trip hazard.
- 8** Polish straps with boot polish or saddle soap. Wash metal in warm water then buff with cloth.