

On Course

with Gill Rolton

Dear Gill,
I have just bought a 15.3 hand Thoroughbred eventer, and his previous owners always used bandages for work and competition. Should I use bandages or boots? If I do use bandages, what is the best way to apply them? I've heard that they could be unsafe, would I be better off using boots?

Samantha

Bowral, NSW

Dear Samantha,
Boots vs. bandages - a perennial question. Boots will protect your horse from superficial bumps and knocks and there is less likelihood of tendon damage, which there is with unskilled bandaging. Boots are also less likely to come undone or slip down. Your information is correct - bandaging can be unsafe in competition and in everyday use. A bandage coming undone could cause a fall. Bandaging too tight, or with uneven pressure, can cause 'bandage bowed' tendons (a condition causing your horse to be off work for quite some time).

There are many types of boots on the market, some more suited to competition and some more suited to everyday use.

For everyday use I use a lightweight well fitting neoprene boot with velcro fastenings or a lambswool lined boot once again, with velcro fastenings as they are quick and easy to put on, give enough protection for everyday work, are easy to clean (by using a stiff brush everyday after work & once a week in the washing machine - but give them a pre rinse under the tap and ask mum first!)

I tend to use the lambswool lined boots whenever I can as they don't cause boot rub on sensitive skinned horses (like Fred) but don't use them when it is muddy or there's a likelihood of them getting wet (ie down the beach).

For cross country, at ODE's I use a sturdier boot that is light weight, does not take up water, and preferably has a leather outer and buckles. This type of boot offers more protection, will not weigh your horse's legs down after the water jump, and will not come off.

If you do use boots with velcro fastenings you will need to use electrical tape over the velcro for added safety.

The only time I use bandages in competition is at

a Thee Day Event where I use 'Porter boots' with a non sticky self adhesive bandage (eg Vetwrap) over the top. This type of wrapping is sturdy, protective, lightweight and water resistant - but quite expensive as the Vetwrap can only be used once and remember to sew the bandage ends even with Vetwrap..

You mention that your horse's previous owner used bandages for work and competition. Was there a reason for the bandaging? Some people use exercise bandages to help 'support' a potential problem.

Correct bandaging for both exercise and protection/treatment is an art and as such useful to learn. But rather than reading about it, I suggest you have a session on bandaging with your coach or ask advice from an experienced competitor.

Theory is fine but the best way to learn is by doing it under the guidance

of a qualified coach or competitor.

And make sure you follow these few basic rules!

1. Always use padding under the bandage - Fybergee or similar is very good - with double thickness over the tendons
 2. Never bandage too tightly - this can lead to tendon damage
 3. Always wrap counter clockwise on the two near side legs and clockwise on the off side legs
 4. When securing with ties or velcro make sure it is fastened in the top third of the bandaging, to the outside of the leg and no tighter than the rest of the bandage.
 5. Make sure that pressure is even all the way down the leg - no wrinkles in the padding.
- Although boots are much more foolproof than bandages, the following rules apply:
1. As with bandages NEVER too tight
 2. Not too large or small - a 15.3 TB would have reasonably fine bone so medium size should suffice
 3. Use talcum powder on the insides of the boot to prevent rubbing
 4. When fitting boots, before doing the straps up, place them higher than they need to be, then slide down into position
 5. Fasten straps so there is even pressure on the leg all the way down.

I hope this helps, have fun competing.

Gillian Rolton

**Greg &
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