
Western riding - is there any point/benefits to me converting to it?

Posted by alexsmum - 2007/07/28 12:55

I have been dithering about trying western for a number of years. I gave up on the idea a few years back when I had my little boy (human!) as I had not time to ride never mind retrain.

A lot of aspects of western appeal to me i.e. looks more relaxed for horse and rider, and the main attraction is to learn new techniques which would be good as it will get my horse thinking again - he switches of if its the same old try and winch into a dressage outline .

But...

I enjoy english riding for shows and we have had some good results locally in mountain and moorland classes.

So what I would really like to know is what would the benefits be to me and my nedly.

Are there are competitive classes we can do? He is a 14.3hh welsh cob. He can already neck rein but thats about as far as our western riding has got.

How do I go about retraining him?

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benefits to me converting to it?

Posted by Joey - 2007/07/28 16:02

Hi fellow Welshie owner! I think I was in similar position to you. A year ago I wasn't really getting anywhere with my western training (Welsh Sec D 15.3!) although we had great fun at attending clinics I was having too many trainers input and I was not really 'getting it' and progressing because I allowed a girl to show him English, another to hunt him and the odd person to take him out hacking as he's very safe. Then I would try to understand western paces but not really get anywhere building him up... so when we moved here, I contacted a chap who took one look at my horse and set up a plan of action. Every week we've had a lesson since April - July last year. Then he went off for 6 weeks full training to transfer into a Shank bit. In the beginning my goal was to be able to just lope! But as he progressed I changed my goals rapidly! Now we are entering shows and I am having fun learning reining patterns, having a go at Horsemanship classes and just enjoying meeting western folk at shows with their horses, be they QH or any other breed.

Western Equestrian Society have shows with any breed, not just QHs. They have a list of trainers/clinics/shows. My advice would be to go and find a trainer, see how they are with horses, how they ride. Get an idea of where your horse is at, where your riding is at, set some goals with your horse and go for it!

Benefits are there! Like, changing horses muscling for the better, level of fitness or way of going...suppleness will keep him healthy for longer? Softer horse in carrying himself with little contact on the rein, better balance...

Go for it! You know you want to?

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benefits to me converting to it?

Posted by alexsmum - 2007/07/28 17:32

Joey thank you, I would be grateful if you could pm some photos of your cob doing western. I tried riding western style in my english saddle today (Im quite english anal i.e. I cant do western in a dressage saddle...).

It was a bit of a revelation . I used some tips picked up from a post on new rider to try and ride . My horse tends to fall in on the left rein in trot and can be very difficult to canter. After 15 mins riding on the buckle he really softened, didnt fall in either rein and picked up canter lead no probs. I would love to slow it to a lope though...

Our background was endurance and so he is used to a long rein and neck reining .it was quite odd really s normally we go in the school and it purgatory for both of us, I am kick , kick (well leg,leg) and trying to get him into an outline, he is backing off the reins and not tracking up. No pressure and he was head down and soft and tracking up - so maybe just maybe I will give it a proper go.

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by hondagirl - 2007/07/28 20:00

Hi! Im in a very similar position to you, I have a welshie too and she too has difficulty in canter and is rather green in terms of the way she carries herself and her balance. She also tends to lean on one side. I had huge problems trying to find a saddle to fit (english) and one that stayed put. My welshie is very spooky and really pivots when she spooks, thanks god she doesnt go far but its quick when she does it. i was flopping off onto the side, loosing balance totally and the saddle went out the side door! Anwya after a while of this i decided to try a western saddle instead and also to try and retrain her in western. I got a great second hand saddle that was fitted to her outline and body shape and fits a treat. I absolutely love it, i feel more secure and she really walks out in it, before we kind of shuffled along but now we stride!! ;D I bought David Grays dvd, the first one, which is very good, shows you all the beginner stuff and alot of it is quite dressagy anyway. But he also shows the jog and lope and the different classes etc.

Ive gone right back to basics with Tilly and am trying to build her confidence as we go along. She moves laterally quite well one way off my legs(slight probs with the other direction!) and turns no problem. We are just beginning to learn rein back. She s a really bright little mare and learns quickly but is also very lacking in confidence so we are going very slow. She is about to have a two week holiday and then I will pick things up again. im going to the WEs show at Moreton Morrell in august, my first one so really looking forward to it (not taking little mare tho!) to see how its really done! Ive also spoken to Shane Borland (Borland Quarter Horses) who is reallt friendly and we spoke about getting madam some training later in the year.

Well, hope i havent bored you senseless,let me know how you get on! all those welshies in westerns eh, have to form a quadrille!!

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by Belle - 2007/07/28 20:48

Hi

Not too sure where everyone is based, but the guy who helped Joey with her handsome welshie is Alan Payne and he's just moved to a new training base in Leicestershire. He works with all breeds (of horse!!) and travels out to teach as well. See you on Sunday at Markfield Joey?!?

Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by Joey - 2007/07/28 21:06

Hee hee, Hi there Belle!
nice name!

Yep, got my PINK stuff ready, bathed his lordship and ready to remember my pattern this time...
won't sleep tonight I reckon...
see you tomorrow!

Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by aliceinwonderland - 2007/07/28 21:19

dont worry joey, we'll have big signs in the sideline telling you the way to go..... LEFT.....RIGHT.....NOT THAT WAY!!!!!!

Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by Isobelj - 2007/07/29 09:11

Benefits are there! Like, changing horses muscling for the better, level of fitness or way of going...suppleness will keep him healthy for longer? Softer horse in carrying himself with little contact on the rein, better balance...

All the above are true from our experience, also the lateral work has shown benefits for her back which were commented on by her 'back lady' without any prior input from us. Improved backing is so useful when leading her. She's off for her first official trail gate lesson on Tuesday! That's in six months. Her jumping has benefited too!
And it's fun!

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by alexsmum - 2007/07/29 10:34

Hi

again, thank you for the input. I particularly like Joeys modesty, that black welsh is fab from the cip she sent to me!

it is really odd, I rode mine again today and he is much happier. Honda girl you will doubtless be pleased to know that he proved his true welshness by losing the plot part way through and swivling 180 degrees followed by buck buck buck...

If I ride him on a loose rein he will stretch down and reach for the bit, he then softens and I get a nice outline. He is neck becomes rounder and his back swings through. he also is less inclined to take off at speed or spook at everything.

If I do the dressage thing which I am told is have contact equivalent to 1/2 sugar bag weight in either rein, he gets very stiff through his back and his underneck muscles start to bulge. he also goes round looking for trouble (scary sparrow this morning!). I don't think he likes the mental and physical pressure.

the canter thing is weird though. I experimented again today and he is definitely better with little contact. I just click and off he goes. I have noticed though that when I take the contact back I am definitely heavier on one rein than the other where as one handed I can't do that! Also if my reins are loose I use my seat much better.

Are you allowed to use your voice in western classes? Mine responds well to voice aids walk, trot, canter etc from voice and I always think it's a bit daft that in dressage you can't use this aid.

Anyway enough from me burbling on. I will end off for David Greys dvd and take it from there I think.

p.s. Isabell I like the firm ideas bit - typical native!

Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by mejopa - 2007/07/29 17:45

Before I got into western had an interesting experience with our 19 yo Sec D - he'd done it all and got the T-shirts to prove it (dressage, XC, ODE, TREC, M&M, ...), but we had a problem a few years ago keeping an outline for dressage, to the extent that he became bridle lame. Tried almost every snaffle on the planet, Myler, you name it, but still an unhappy boy. Could force the work with a double bridle, but we both hated it. So switched to hackamore - result one happy boy working in a relaxed outline with lots of impulsion. He's now ridden western in a sidepull and is enjoying his work. So keep trying - a lot of horses are much happier with minimal contact and weight aids.

Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by Isobelj - 2007/07/30 07:18

Hi

yes, Alexsmum, everything you say about more relaxed is something we have found too. My attraction to western was that you left the horse alone much more. We conclude (from our small sample) that the relaxed laid back western horse is not just temperament but a response to the style of riding and tack. We were concerned that having been used to nag-nag lots of contact classic riding our pony would feel 'lost' but no, lovely stretching down and the apperance of a brilliant jog trot which is soooo comfortable even I don't bounce. The idea was our son outgrew her for jumping & then I had her for western but now he's hooked too.

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by alexsmum - 2007/10/04 21:16

Hello

After much debate I am going to give western a proper go. I have tried and tried to translate the feel I get on minimal contact, legs first, seat and then reins to english riding but I just cant. if I ride English my horse stiffens and we are back to the weight in hand, tap,tap, tap , tap with heels, whack whack whack thing with whip.he will round up if i work at it but he really isnt happy so Im not happy.

If I go round with the reins in one hand relying on neck reining and leg aids I have a wonderfully light horse.

Comments on the yard varied from

'wells hes much happier with a loose rein'
to
'well any horse would be happy like that as hes not really working'

Husband says sod everyones opinions go with my gut instinct!

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by markrm - 2007/10/05 21:56

Good for you, Alexsmum. give it a go and ignore the negative comments. I used to ride English for many years before converting to Western about 5 or 6 years ago. It might take a little while, but its better for you and better for the horse. It gives you the best chance to work with your horse and is much more relaxed - I've never looked back. To help yourself try to get to a few shows. I'm not sure where you are but it's worth travelling to see what can be achieved, whatever breed you ride. Its also good to mix with like minded riders especially if you're based in an English yard. Western riding is still very much in the minority and visiting Western shows or going to clinics will help to give you encouragement and support, not to mention Western riders are a friendly bunch
:)

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Re: Western riding - is there any point/benfits to me converting to it?

Posted by hunterrookie - 2007/10/07 12:10

We were at a little WES show yesterday and it was great to see riders with all types of horses having a go at the different classes and having FUN. There were lots of Appys, cobs and welshies and the diversity is one of the best things about WES.

After the distress of having a poorly horse last year, it has been so much fun to get out to the shows and see everyone enjoying themselves.

Well done to Wendy and Steve Scott for organising the Solihull show and for building such an interesting trail course. Madam thought it was great, once she realised there were actually no beasties hiding in the chrysanthemums decorating the bridge!

But one of the best bits was seeing the delight of a young lady with a nice little black welshie take sixth place in the novice horse trail! Long live western, there's something for everyone.

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