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## Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by alexsmum - 2008/05/01 21:06

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I started riding western last year having been inspired by a display I saw and then trying bareback with my horse and really enjoyed it.) . I bought a western treeless saddle (Barefoot) and was happy at first however I had quite a few problems with the saddle. It rested on my horses withers and caused muscle damage. I resolved this with theraputic padding only to have the saddle start to revolve resulting in horse taking off up a road with me hanging off the side!:blink:

I thought we were getting some where with western schooling as horse picked up the aids so much better than english ones. i.e he will neck rein, side pass sort of and has the start of spin. However, dressage quuen at yard said 'of course any horse would be happier doing that as the arent working hard at all'. But is it me? Why shoudl schooling involve a horse sweating its guts out to go round in a very pulled in outline?

I was really looking forward the wes training clinic at Moreton Morrell last month, and paid to go. However, I couldnt attend in the end as Im moving house from Brum to m/Cr and every spare moment and penny is involved in that. its a shame as it would I think have made me realise what path I should take.

Anyway with saddle problems and the comments etc I went back to what I know i.e English tack. And we are kind of back to square one. My pony doesnt really enjoy dressage, he can work in an outline but it takes him a lot of effort and he cannot canter in a dressage outline. Anyway, a friend at the yard rode him tonight and her comments were dont do dressage with this horse, his canter is terrible and he hates it.

We are going back to long distance, I just wonder if I should do it with my english tack or have a go at western again. I dont really like the western image per say (i.e the hats etc) but I love the ethos and the training that can be achieved i.e stacey westfall.

Sorry to burble on - its a bit lonely as the sole westerner on my yard!!

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by appynospots - 2008/05/01 21:34

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If your horse is happier in western tack ride in it.

Dont forget you keep your horse for the ENJOYMENT it brings, worrying about his well being will tarnish what should be a good experience for the both of you.

So go with what you know your horse enjoys, and use the tack your comfortable with. I would try another type of saddle, treeless is great when it works.

i have just tried a bob marshall sports saddle on our horse and he loves it, he moves so much better in it.Sadly they dont come cheap or over here!

I am not into 'western' per se, either,but I found our horse enjoyed her work more, was more relaxed and cooperative than when she was doing dressage.

Dressage is wonderful, but does not suit all, and is damned hard work for horse and rider. Why argue the finer points, riding is supposed to be fun.

The clinic would ve helped you to focus.When you have your life all back on track I suggest you treat yourself and your boy to a western holiday at a good training yard, then make your mind up. I already know you will stick with western, because your listening to your horse!

Good Luck.

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by alexsmum - 2008/05/01 22:25

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Thank you! I dont quite know why I feel obliged to 'fit in' at the yard. I had a quick look at reining on you tube and its amazing how many are on there with no bits, tack etc and performing wonderfully. I would love to have that empathy with

my horse.

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by Caz - 2008/05/02 07:29

Just because you've got english tack on doesn't mean you have to ride in a forced outline.

Proper classical dressage isn't that way at all, its all about asking the horse to do something and placing yourself in the correct way so as it becomes easy for the horse & the horse is balanced and has self collection, but unfortunately you don't need to ride like that anymore in dressage even at the highest of levels, it is becoming more acceptable to have a forced outline with a horse that is resistant.

Anyway, when i first got my QH i rode in my english tack as i was waiting for my western tack to arrive, you can still give western aids & go in a 'western outline' in english tack.

If you want to compete obviously you'll have to have western tack but if you don't want to compete & you're having issues with saddles, just use your english tack.

Try not to feel like your doing the wrong thing because of other peoples opinions (i know its hard when you're going 'against the grain'), do what you know is best for your horse & what you'll both be happier with.

Good luck!

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by Dingbat - 2008/05/02 08:25

Forget what everyone else does/says at the yard... what do YOU feel is right? You know your horse and your own mind. I agree its hard being on an all english yard - i am too, and so its hard keeping motivation. Lessons and going to watch at shows have kept me inspired. i've had bad days though, just like anyone! :unsure:

I have competed dressage before with my other horse (as well as some jumping etc) and so i know kind of what is expected there and how much i enjoyed it. i did enjoy it to be honest. i like having an aim. But i also have that with western.

Could you get an instructor out? Have a lesson? saddles are a nightmare full stop, but you will find one to fit if you keep looking. you have just been unlucky.

If you are contemplating dressage then i would have a lesson with an EE instructor or go and have a go on a simulator. i think its very eye opening and a lot of these 'normal' dressage riders do seem to make it too complicated and stressful! you need to relax and enjoy it! :cheer:

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by amanda - 2008/05/02 09:05

Oh dear, poor you - I do sympathise. It is very very hard being the only 'westerner'on a yard, especially when you are in the early stages of learning - the 'know all divas' certainly can sense vulnerable live prey and they home in every time! They love to criticise simply because it gives them a bit of an ego trip...

Anyhow, that doesn't really help you does it? The only way it will work for you is for you to get as good as you can, and then you will be confident in your knowledge and the 'know alls' will back off..

So, the only way to improve is to get lessons, go to clinics, ride as much as you can. Yes you can do it on any saddle but honestly, if you can get yourself a good western saddle it will help you both enormously. How about posting to see if you can meet up with other western riders in your area? You might even consider a move to a yard with other western riders - believe me, it will make so much difference to have other like-minded people to work with. I know of a few people who have struggled on alone, and eventually given up, so having western friends around you will help enormously.

As for the comment from the know all who consideres your horse to have a 'bad canter' - what a negative thing to

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say...as a dressage rider surely she should be looking to improve his way of going, rather than writing him off. Hope you manage to turn things around for you and your horse - do let us know how you get on! regards, Amanda

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by scotty - 2008/05/02 18:03

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Well said everybody and you stick to your guns girl!

You see so many stressed, miserable dressage horses with riders who nevertheless feel competent to criticise others. If that's their idea of horsemanship I personally want no part of it. I'm not knocking dressage per se as there are many, many riders who seek to follow the classical principles but sadly, as has been said here already, there are too many who don't. I know one leading equine physio who refused to carry on treating horses on a leading dressage rider's yard due to the ongoing abuse of the horses and she had to stop her regular trips to Holland, to work on a big dressage yard, as she would be so upset by the time she returned home. She said the horses reminded her of battery hens.

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by Roland - 2008/05/02 20:38

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Did you say you were in the manchester area??

We have regular cinics over here in area 2 cheshire (WES) with Sherie Dermody for all levels she is a excellent trainer who has done dressage to a high level, and western or she could give lessons to you and your horse at her place nr Nantwich...good luck and keep the faith :)

Post edited by: Roland, at: 2008/05/03 07:10

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by Isobelj - 2008/05/03 09:04

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Don't get disheartened, we too had a pony with an awful canter....

We started with western arena exercises (books via Book Depository/amazon), no spins or anything complicated. All last summer we played with stopping starting and circles, with cones and some basic trail poles to keep it interesting. Now we have a pony with a lovely canter and a well muscled back that means she works beautifully western or english. Also even better manners on the ground having spent time on that re-showmanship.

So have faith in your skills and 'think western',and while you sort out saddles lessons, clinics etc there is lots to do to show the dressage divas that it's about horsemanship not riding...

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by quarterhorsemad - 2008/05/04 18:38

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I agree, you stick to your guns and don't feel that you have to do what everyone else on the yard does. I used to keep my horse on a yard of hunters/jumpers a few years ago and the yard owner laughed at my 14.3hh QH mare, then he found out how much the foals sold for! He also saw me work the same mare in the indoor school 'round penning' her at one end of the school (with no barriers), she worked perfectly round me and stopped still on command! He never laughed again!!!!!!!!!!

My daughter bought an ex hunter from him, this poor horse had been ridden for 4 years by a hunt servant who used his favourite comfortable saddle. Only trouble was it did not fit the mare properly. She had a terrible outline and went around with her back stiff and her head up. We gave her some time off and got a correctly fitting saddle, When she went back into work, I rode her with western length reins and virtually no contact on her mouth. She enjoyed stretching out and the outline gradually came back, she even started being able to jump again. This same horse - who had been chased round the indoor school with a lunge whip for exercise during hunt season - also learned to 'round pen' around me with no

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barriers, just like my QH. She took a while but soon came to enjoy herself. Lots of the others on the yard started to listen & watch after this. It gave quite a few people some eye openers, so do not be afraid, do what is best for you and your horse and let the others get on with it. They can either learn to accept your style or keep their noses out.

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by alexsmum - 2008/05/06 18:40

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Thank you every one. I plan to look up western trainers once I have settled down in new home and yard next month.

I do find it hard to divorce english ridng style (leg,leg,leg, hold in outline)from English tack. Howevoer I rode up lane and back tonight (20 mins) in my WH saddle western style and my pony was so much happier. He can be very jumpy and I tend to pressurise him to go on. Western styley with minimal contact and neck reining he seems to be able to think more clearly and panick less.

My gran plan is to go back to long distance riding and save for a decent light weight western trail saddle.

I am moving to Mossley (in between oldham and Aston/stalybridge), dont know if any you are in the vacinity?

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by hunterrookie - 2008/05/06 21:39

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Would certainly recommend you get in touch with Scherie Dermody - she will be so helpful, and will definitely have some ideas about finding a saddle. She also has 'english' horses so she will understand the dilemmas. Interestingly, my horse was started western and dressage has been a massive learning curve for her - every time we hit

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a problem, we go back to western aids (yes, in an English saddle and snaffle bridle) to restore the lines of communication. She now thinks she has life sorted out by completely rejecting her English saddle, but I have a very determined saddler who is on a mission to make it fit a very muscled up western competition horse!

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by Roland - 2008/05/06 21:43

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Hi Im about 20 miles south of you PM me if you like. , I would recomend joining WES im sure there are members close by that you can hook up with. this thing about english v western.. you should be using your legs in western too... hands are for guiding and positioning your horse while your legs are for movement... :)

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by mel\_misty - 2008/07/28 11:37

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hi, sorry to read all about your ups and downs you seem to have tried so hard!  
i agree join WES, you get a local area rep, as you get out into areas, eg im west midlands so are 10 who will be able to help with trainers near you and WES have lists of approved Instructors! i had a similar argument with english or western, and the more informed you get the better its always going to be!

mel

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## Re:Western riding - sooo depressed about it

Posted by alexsmum - 2008/08/19 19:52

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Hi all

I have now settled in to my new home and the miles and miles of lovely hacking on the pennine bridleway such a change from riding in rush hour traffic around housing estates in Brum!

I have not restarted western riding as yet and amazingly did my first 'proper' dressage test in 7 years and came 5th and yes there were a lot more than 5 horses competing!! think all the hill works helped collection.

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