

# Setting your horse up for success with

# Harry Meade



We have teamed up with Dodson & Horrell and their new ambassador, Harry Meade, to share with you his top training exercises that he uses regularly with his horses. Known for his quiet and sympathetic style of riding, Harry gives us an insight into setting your horse up for success, from the arena to the cross country field.



**Exercise focus:** Improving agility and technique

**Horse:** Mister Optimistic (Mo), six year old 3/4 TB gelding.

**The exercise:** A bounce grid on a curve. Begin with a fan of five canter poles on the ground and get the horse used to cantering over the centre of

them whilst remaining well-balanced on a circle. Ensure the striding is measured from the centre of each pole (10 feet/ 3m) and that this is the part that is being ridden over. Once the horse is comfortable on both reins you can gradually put the poles up onto the fences one at a time, building up to five bounces on a curve.

**Harry explains how to ride it:**

“A bounce grid on a curve is an exercise that is gymnastically demanding for the horse and testing for the rider’s balance. It is a great exercise for developing the canter and for encouraging the horse to play with his feet. The rider has the responsibility of maintaining the circle and aiming for the central stripe on the pole each time for accuracy; it tests the riders ability to remain quiet with their body. You should ride for a uniform curve each time - it is important for the horse not to drift in or bulge out on the circle as this would then make the distance to the next fence too long or too short.

- As you jump each fence, look for the centre of the next whilst being careful not to affect your horse’s balance.
- Keep your seat light in the saddle so you can follow the movement of each bounce, and allow the horse to stretch over each fence but don’t get in front of the movement.
- Keep your torso up in the air - upper body movement will not help your horse through a bounce exercise. Don’t confuse this with



Progress to putting alternate canter poles up as uprights

having a light seat, they are separate issues.

- Maintain your concentration all the way up to the landing of the last bounce, but still don’t drop the horse on landing - sit up and ride a correct turn away from the grid.

“Keep the pace consistent by establishing the rhythm before turning to the grid. You want to ensure

there is sufficient impulsion to make it through the whole grid.

“When riding the exercise you are looking to keep the inside hand up and soft; do not drop it down, back or out to the side as this will jack-knife the neck, causing the body to bulge out through the shoulder and onto a wider circle. Use the outside aids to support the horse and prevent them from drifting out, keep the inside leg on subtly so they don’t cut in on the curve. If your horse keeps falling out on the turn, you can put the outside cup four holes higher on each fence.

*....it is useful for riding tight combinations and improves the power of the horse’s jump.*

“Taking this exercise to the cross country field, it is useful for riding tight combinations and improves the power of the horse’s jump. It also teaches the rider to control the shoulders on the turn as well as helping to position the horse to jump a specific part of the fence.”

Photos by Nick Perry



Begin with a fan of five canter poles on the ground

## Benefits of riding this exercise:

- Bounces help to develop the horse's reflexes by making him snap up in front quickly, shorten his stride and help to develop technique through a well-rounded jump.
- They encourage the horse to push off the ground with an increased force, which can improve overall strength and agility in the jump.
- Setting these out on a curve puts an extra demand on the horse's co-ordination. It stretches the horse's top line, which allows the hocks to come further underneath the horse. It is important to practise this exercise equally on both reins.
- Jumping on a turn helps the rider to focus and think about their aids and position, whilst keeping control of the horse's shoulders. It tests the rider's ability to remain quiet with their upper body, allowing the horse to jump to his full potential.

*Harry is one of Britain's leading event riders. He is currently looking for new rides at all levels. For more information visit [www.harrymeade.com](http://www.harrymeade.com)*

## Feeding for muscle health and development

By Dodson & Horrell Vet, Chloe Bristow MRCVS

Muscle condition is important for all horses, but for horses in work, supple, healthy muscles are an absolute must. What many people forget is that it's not just about training – what you feed your horse will influence how easily they build and repair muscle.

What are the key nutritional elements for developing muscle? Just as houses are made up of bricks, the protein in muscle is made up of amino acids, such as lysine. Lysine is the first limiting amino acid in horses, which means that it is the nutrient that will prevent muscle development if your horse is not getting enough.

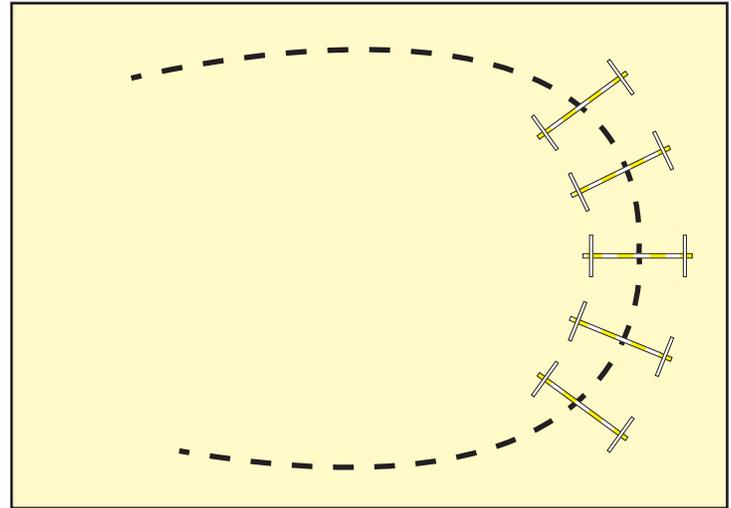
Trying to build muscle without enough lysine is like trying to build a house with no bricks; no matter how hard you work it is impossible! Lysine is present in good quality, complete feeds and balancers designed for working horses. It is present in small amounts in hay and grass, but forage alone may not provide enough for your horse. Checking you are providing enough lysine will ensure your horse has the tools they need to develop supple, strong muscles.

For horses in work, it's not just about building muscle but about

keeping muscles fit and healthy. Every time your horse exercises, microscopic tears can appear in their muscles and some cells can become damaged. This will be particularly significant if your horse is performing exercises that require strength, such as jumping or demanding dressage movements like piaffe.

When muscle cells are damaged, they release chemicals called free radicals. Antioxidants such as vitamin E 'mop-up' these excess free radicals and can play an important role in promoting recovery after exercise. You can also help your horse's muscles recover quicker by providing a source of energy to replenish muscle glycogen stores. Ensuring your feed contains a blend of micro-managed cooked cereals and a high quality antioxidant package will help keep your horse's muscles healthy and ready for the next challenge. Dodson & Horrell performance feeds Competition Mix and Staypower Muesli, as well as Ultimate Balancer, contain optimal levels of lysine and antioxidants to support muscle health and development.

**For more information, call the Dodson & Horrell nutrition advice line on 01832 737 300.**



Ensure the striding is measured from the centre of each pole (10 feet / 3m)



As you jump each fence, look for the centre of the next



Support the shoulders on the turn with your outside aids and keep the inside hand soft



The rider must keep the horse on the correct line through the curve to avoid the striding being either too short (drifting in) or too long (drifting out)

Watch Harry demonstrate this exercise by watching the video by visiting [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXLp-i7vqUo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXLp-i7vqUo)