

# **British Team Chasing – Cross Country Events**

## **Course Layout and Construction Guidelines**

**Last amended - July 2016**

The requirements of a Team Chase course are unique to the sport and differ from those of an eventing or hunter trial course, although the basic principles of fence construction are the same.

### **Layout**

There will be natural constraints put on the layout by the venue available and some compromise may have to be reached but important factors are:

1. A good view of the course from the spectator/car park area.
2. Safe access to the course for spectators. Any areas of risk must be clearly marked as such.
3. Vehicle access for medical, veterinary and fence repair to all parts of the course, and always to both sides of the fences.
4. A trade stand / catering area off limit to horses.
5. A warm up / practice area close to the start sufficient for up to 50 horses at any one time.
6. A public address system, which includes the lorry park.
7. The use of barrier tape around horse areas (it will break if a horse gets entangled). This is also useful to create safe spectator viewing areas close to popular fences.
8. After the finish there should be sufficient distance for pulling-up in an area which is completely free of spectators.
9. Ideally a course length of between one and a half and two miles is recommended (see paragraph on 'Classes' in 'The Rules'), with 25 to 30 fences.
10. Ridge and furrow should try to be avoided wherever possible, but where it exists, it is important to try to place fences where there are 2 strides before and after each fence on flat ground. The route of a course should always endeavour to follow ridges wherever possible, and not cross furrows consistently.

### **Course Construction**

The most important point to remember in building a team chase course is the boldness, quality, strength and structure of the fences. Team chasing is a competition decided on time. The course should be built with this in mind. Various methods can be found to reduce speed such as tight turns, careful fence flagging, pens, etc.

11. The course should be nearly the same as possible for the last team as for the first. To ensure this, attention should be paid to the state of take offs and landings to ensure they are sound and not likely to become unduly poached in wet weather.
12. The fence construction materials used must be robust, this will minimise repairs on the day. The availability and quality of repair materials should also be carefully considered.
13. All fences must have good ground lines. The first fence should be broad, inviting and straight on from the start.
14. Maximum use should be made of natural fences, particularly hedges.
15. The width of a fence must be proportionate to its height.
16. Greenery in hedges makes the horses jump better, protects the horse and hedge, and improves the appearance of the course. A Christmas tree on either side of the fence helps steering and protects flags.
17. Narrow island obstacles should be avoided. Fences should be sufficiently wide for more than one competitor to jump at a time (approx. 6 metres is ideal).
18. It is nearly always essential to rail hedges for protection. The rails should be secure, imposing and substantial enough not to be damaged in normal circumstances. Rails should always be on the take off side of hedges, as rails sited behind hedges are dangerous. Never reinforce natural fences with a high single rail. Use either a fixed ground line or preferably a ground line and rails to two-thirds height of the hedge. Mid-height rails in front of a hedge should ideally not blend in with background colours or hedge material. There should be a minimum of 8" or 200mm of hedge protruding above any fixed rail.
19. Post and rail fencing and timber obstacles must be well build and should not look airy. Telegraph poles are the best timber to use and should be roped on, not nailed.
20. Narrow island fences (i.e. in the centre of a field) should not have wings, providing a run-by is not deemed to be dangerous. Narrow fences in a hedge line must have fully prescribed wings. Narrow fences of less than 3m in width (whilst not encouraged) should easily knock down and must not contain any sharp points of edges.
21. Ditches should have sound, well-supported banks, be well defined, preferably with a pole on take off and the grass strimmed so that the ditch can be easily seen.
22. Ditches behind should have a sloping edge and not a vertical 'lip'. No riveted ditches or manmade structures are permitted behind the main part of a fence.
23. Water obstacles should have sound, even bottoms and firm banks. Jumps out of water should be avoided. When jumping into water, maximum depth of water should not exceed 12" or 305mm, with a preferred depth of 6" to 8" or 152mm to 200mm.
24. Walls must have a groundline and be capped with timber. There should be no protruding stone.

25. Designers should endeavour to site combination fences in a manner whereby the second element of the fence is positioned on a slight angle to allow horses to run down it slightly. The second element must not contain wings.
26. Portable fences should be secured in a manner which minimises the risk of the fence moving if/when hit by a horse or horses. Additionally, method of construction should thoroughly guard against the prospect of any part of the fixed obstacle rising up and increasing in height from the ground when hit by a horse.
27. Ground conditions throughout the course, and particularly take-off and landing areas are particularly important considerations in the running of a good event. Organisers should consider the use of ground equipment such as aerators, or materials such as small wood chippings or bark to provide a consistent, even and sound surface wherever possible. However many courses will operate within the limitations of farming environments, which is fully recognised by all participants.
28. The size of the fences is not important if they are consistent. However, a bigger well-built fence will generally jump better as the horses can judge a larger fence more easily at speed than a smaller one, which is below their eye level.
  - a. Avoid one or two large fences in an otherwise much smaller course. Fences should be generally of an even height and size for the type of course to be constructed (see paragraph on 'Classes' in 'The Rules').
29. A pen is recommended half way round the course to provide a spectacle and bring the team together. The first three horses entering the pen should have twelve feet on the floor before anyone jumps out. The penalty for failing to observe this rule to be the addition of 20 seconds per team. There should be at least one fence judge purely to watch for this. It is recommended that there are 4 or 5 strides minimum between two elements of a pen or combination fence. Course builders must also seek to restrict dangerous inside lines within a pen complex.
30. A practice fence should be provided in the collecting ring, which should be solid and of a suitable height for all competitors.
31. The following are considered dangerous and should be avoided:
  - a. Large bales or any straw bales on their own
  - b. Walls of unsecured tyres. Tyres may only be used as securely fixed fillers inside a timber frame, or as a filler in front of or below either a rail or hedge. Course builders should exercise extreme care with tyres, given the propensity of injuries caused by competing horses wearing rubber tendon or overreach boots.
  - c. Narrow fences in wet areas.
  - d. Jumping into trees or woods, without a clear path ahead.
  - e. Unprotected or narrow gateways.
  - f. Exposed stakes in mechanically cut hedges.
  - g. Wire in, or too close to any obstacle.
  - h. The crossing of the course by different competing teams.
  - i. The use of long lengths of rope (not easily broken) in horse areas. Rope or polypropylene string of a maximum individual length of 30m, secured on plastic stakes, is considered safe and reasonable.
  - j. Upright fences without good ground lines.
  - k. Flimsy materials, which encourage horses to be careless.

## GENERAL

1. Organisers should undertake a robust risk assessment process, particularly with reference to loose horses, Horses and spectators should generally be segregated in the principal areas of an event. Care must be taken with positioning of Stewards to ensure they are available to shut important gates.
2. Organisers should consider providing Jump Judges with high-vis vests, flags and whistles. There should be sufficient radios on course during an event (with fully briefed operators) to adequately cover the course, with the ability to view the take-offs and landings of each fence. For the avoidance of doubt it is not necessary to have a radio operator at each and every fence.
3. Organisers must provide clear, annotated course maps for all emergency vehicles, medical and veterinary personnel, to reduce the risks from any time delay.
4. In the event of hot weather, organisers should ensure that a good, constant and accessible supply of water is available to competitors at or near the finish to assist any horse which finishes tired.

## CLASSES

Only the following terms shall be used to define classes:

- a) Novice. Fixed obstacles which are a minimum height of 80cm (2'8") but not to exceed 100cm (3'3"). Length of course to be approximately 2,414m (1.5 miles).
- b) Intermediate. The majority of fixed obstacles to be approximately 107cm (3'6"), but not to exceed 115cm (3'9"). Length of course to be approximately 2,816m (1.75 miles).
- c) Open. The majority of fixed obstacles to be not less than 107cm (3'6") but not more than 120cm (3'11"). Length of course to be approximately 3,219m (2 miles) and not less than 2,414m (1.5 miles).

Organisers should also note:

- d) If the term "Allcomers" is used, it must be preceded by the word "Novice", "Intermediate" or "Open", whichever best describes the course.
- e) Only "Open" or "Open Allcomers" classes may be considered as qualifiers for the BTC National Team Chase Championship.
- f) Events that have an Open Qualifier must run their Intermediate class against the clock (but can run part of the class or another similar class against a Bogey Time).
- g) A "Fun" class is held entirely at the Organisers discretion, but must be decided by a "bogey" time.

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Please consult the BTC Committee before starting construction of a new course, and liaise closely at all times with your appointed Course Inspector. Where required BTC will be pleased to put you in touch with a course inspector for practical advice in respect of potential new courses.

It is recommended that fence builders acquire a copy of "A Basic Guide to Building Cross-country Fences" (published 28 Jun 2006) by Philip Herbert and Johnny Marsh. Alternatively, please refer to "Cross-country Course Design and Construction" by Mike Etherington-Smith (published 31 Aug 2003).