

**MFHA TEAM CHASE COMMITTEE** met at the Farmers Club on Thursday 4th December 2008 when the following members were present:  
Mr J Cowen MFH (Chairman); Miss B S Walkinshaw (Hon. Sec.): Mr A W Berry MFH; Mr A Brown; Mr J K Buckle MFH; Mr P E Cowen MFH; Mr G Goring; Mr W Grant; Mrs M Vestey MFH and Mrs N Nevill. 5 members were unable to attend. A synopsis of the principal matters discussed at that meeting is as follows:

### **1 NEW EVENTS IN THE SOUTH WEST**

The Mendip Farmers, Clifton on Teme and the Avon Vale had indicated an interest in running new events which had not so far been followed up by these hunts.

### **2 ESSEX AND SUFFOLK EVENT**

Extreme wet weather in the run up to this event resulted in a rise in water levels at the river crossing which caused some concern. The event sensibly went ahead, with the organizers taking certain extra precautions, but it was felt advisable to ask the Course Inspector, Sally Main, to discuss with the Organizers in advance of future events what action it would be best to take, if the situation should recur.

### **3 AUTUMN 2008 SEASON**

Generally the autumn season went well although there had been some reduction in entries and some difficulty in attracting local sponsors. The feedback received from event organizers was welcomed and considered by the committee. It was unfortunate that the Pytchley were forced to cancel due to weather conditions.

### **4 2009 SEASON – List of Dates**

There are no changes to the spring dates, although the Berks and Bucks are considering moving forward 1 week to 5th April 2009 to try to maximize Open entries at that time in the season. A list of proposed dates for Autumn 2009 was discussed by the committee.

### **5 COURSE INSPECTION and COURSE BUILDING**

The Essex and Suffolk, Atherstone and Belvoir were particularly congratulated for the presentation of their courses in the Autumn season. In general the quality and standard of courses is continuing to improve

### **6 THE WAY FORWARD – OPEN TEAMS**

It was accepted that there are now only about 10 regular Open Teams on the circuit and in view of this only one Open event can run each weekend. The comments from the Web site were considered and it was generally felt that whilst some of the better Intermediate Teams will “have a go” at the occasional Open it is difficult for them to upgrade permanently and be competitive at Open level. We need to try to encourage more owners and top level riders to get involved in the sport – it was felt the website may have a big part to play in this respect. If numbers competing in Open classes do not increase, there is a danger that event organizers will no longer consider it economic or worthwhile to build an Open course.

### **7 THE WAY FORWARD – INTERMEDIATES**

The Intermediate classes have now become well established and have been successful at encouraging novices to upgrade. There are a number of consistently good Intermediate teams who need to be encouraged to compete week on week and to move up to Open classes when

they feel ready to do so.

## **8 THE WAY FORWARD – NOVICES**

It was not felt that there had been a significant downturn in Novice entries. More Novice/ Intermediate events need to be established. Although Novice courses are inspected it was felt it would be too onerous on course inspectors to measure distances and set optimum times for these classes. Events should however be encouraged to publish course descriptions on the web site and try to establish some consistency. The creation and administration of an Order of Merit for Novice Teams would be difficult as we are reliant on event secretaries to provide accurate results and it is a considerable task to ensure that accurate records of points scores on the “leader board” are maintained – even if it were thought desirable, which was doubtful.

## **9 THE ORDER OF MERIT**

It was agreed that the Order of Merit should continue but that there should be separate leagues for Open and Intermediate Teams with Intermediate Teams receiving Bonus Points for competing in Open Classes. George Goring confirmed that The Goring Hotel would continue to Sponsor the Order of Merit.

## **10 THE LEVY**

As previously arranged the levy will continue for the Spring season and be reviewed at the next Committee meeting in May 2009. Competitors should get some recognition and benefit from paying the levy and it was agreed that they should be entitled to attend the Annual Conference in May. It was agreed that whilst some of the accumulated levy money needs to be retained to be utilized in the event that a new National Sponsorship deal is necessary, a proportion should be invested this year in promoting the image of the sport.

## **11 THE NATIONAL SPONSORS**

A new National Sponsorship deal has been agreed with the company which purchased Humberts from its Administrators. This is for a period until April 2010 with an option to renew. Details have been circulated to events and published on the website. Grateful thanks were recorded to the “new” Humberts for stepping in with this new sponsorship

## **12 PRIZE MONEY**

There has been a lot of flexibility in prize money in the autumn due to the uncertainty over national sponsorship. Historically there seems to be no correlation between numbers of entries and prize fund.

## **13 LOCAL STEWARDS**

These are required at all events and should be fully conversant with the Rules and be prepared to discipline riders where necessary.

## **14 THE RULES**

It was agreed that Rule 13 should be amended to allow 4 year old horses to compete at novice level.

The rule in relation to horse falls was discussed and it was suggested that this should be amended to differentiate between falls whilst negotiating an obstacle and falls on the flat. It was felt that drawing a distinction would create uncertainty and could cause disputes and

place too much reliance on fences judges to make important decisions. The rule in its present form will therefore remain.

#### **15 TEAM CHASE WEBSITE**

There has been some preliminary research into upgrading the look and design of Website and the options will be explored and a report and recommendations prepared for the committee.

#### **16 SAFETY**

There were no new issues raised.

#### **17 COMMENTARIES**

Many commentaries continue to be indifferent and commentators are still not fully briefed on the horse fall rule, often encouraging riders to remount.

#### **18 OPEN QUALIFIERS**

It was noted that there had been little recognition for qualifying teams this autumn and agreed that we should provide rosettes to all qualifiers for 2009, which will be done

#### **19 COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS**

It was agreed that a synopsis of the committee deliberations should be published on the Team Chase Web site.

#### **20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This will be held on Wednesday 6th May 2009 at Cheltenham Racecourse at 10am followed by the Annual Conference to which all involved in team chasing would be invited.