

Securing Portable Cross Country Fences



Introduction

Portable Cross Country fences are an essential regular feature of many modern courses. However heavy and solid they may appear, they must be securely fixed before they are jumped.

A horse going at normal Cross Country speed can have a very significant impact upon an obstacle. Any fence that moves unexpectedly can cause a fall or make that fall significantly worse, regardless of the size of the fence or size of the horse or pony. Thus portables must be secured adequately in all situations at all times.

Techniques

Fences may be secured using posts or ground anchors, as described below.

Posts

- These must be substantial in size and well dug or driven into the ground. In general terms a post should be driven 0.75m into the ground but with some ground conditions it may be necessary to drive them further into the ground. When a post is dug into the ground care must be taken to ensure that it is secure and cannot be moved, the ground round it must be well compacted after digging.
- There should be posts at the back of the fence. If these are below the highest part of the fence there should also be posts at the front of the fence to stop the front lifting on impact. The fence then needs to be fixed to the post through the frame.
- Avoid using posts that have a large number of knots in them because these imperfections can affect the strength of the post.
- You can combine ground anchors and posts, ground anchors at the front and posts behind for example.

Ground Anchors

- The most commonly used ground anchors are the Spirafix system that come in two lengths (460mm and 620mm). The correct one to use will depend upon the soil type. A sandy soil will usually require a longer anchor than one in a heavy clay soil. Illustrated installation instructions can be found at the Spirafix website (<http://www.spirafix.com/products/installation-guidance2>), and it is recommended that this be printed off, laminated, and kept with the anchors.
- The Spirafix anchors are effective but other methods are available.
- The anchors should be at the front of the fence, or at both front and back.
- At least two must be used for each fence or element.

- Fences with narrow base spreads may require additional ground anchors.
- Ground anchors must be securely fixed to the fence. Where brackets are used these must be fixed to the frame of the fence so that they do not break away on impact.

Artificial Surfaces and Water Jumps

There are some situations where posts and ground anchors cannot be used. They would damage the membranes of all weather arenas and of water jumps. The design should enable them to be weighted down with ballast, sand bags, concrete or containers filled with sand or water. If you have any doubt please seek advice by contacting the Health and Safety Chairman at safety@pcuk.org or via The Pony Club office.

Using Portable Fences

Competitions

- Check each fence carefully during course building and on the final course walk on the morning of the competition. This should be recorded in writing.
- Instruct your fence judges at the briefing to check that repeated small impacts or a major stop and impact do not loosen the posts or ground anchors.
- Ensure that your course repair team have spares to re-fix a fence.

Rallies

- Check every portable before anyone jumps it and record on the risk assessment in writing.
- Ensure that instructors check each portable before any of their ride jumps it. Another ride might have loosened it.