

## *Appendix D How to build a simple barrel horse*

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There are many different kinds of stationary horses around, most of them 'home designed'. The main thing is that your barrel be stable, and it depends on your talents as handy-man (or woman!) what kind you will choose. If someone of your club has access to a welder, you can use a steel barrel and weld legs and handles (similar in shape to the handles on your surcingle) right onto it. Pad the barrel and wrap the handles generously and you're set! If you have to build out of wood, the simplest way to achieve a more or less realistic form is to cut oval shapes out of plywood (double them up and laminate for stability), one for the rear, one for the front, and at least one for under the surcingle. Screw strapping overtop, as shown in the cut-away, then pad with thick foam.

The body's circumference should be 2.00 metres maximum, as otherwise your surcingle will not fit. If you will strap your surcingle onto the 'dummy', you need to build up some withers on the barrel. Otherwise the surcingle will turn. You could also bolt some kind of handles onto the wooden support, but with the lateral forces being applied, they have the tendency to come loose or break very soon. Using the real surcingle also has the advantage that the vaulters use the same kind of handles, and experience the height (the 'step') of the surcingle, which comes into play in many exercises (such as the backward scissors!)

A neck is not absolutely necessary, but it is nice for practising team exercises. Two rings at the front to affix the side reins is useful to practise keeping your feet away from them in transitions and jumps (nothing is more painful to the horse than a vaulter jumping directly onto the side reins). A cover of plastic works

well if you have to park it outside, carpet samples work as well, but the vaulters need long pants – or else, carpet burn! Best cover would be something you can take off and wash occasionally. The height the legs should be is debatable. If you spot high exercises (like handstands) you want the dummy low; when you practice mounts, not too low. A good average height is about 1.30 metres or just above 4 feet, which allows you to practise both reasonably well. Lucky vaulters, like ours, use stationary horses with adjustable (and removable) legs. This also has great advantages for transport, if you drive your barrel around to clinics all the time, as we do. The main thing is that the legs be well secured (bolted in several places) and braced, and far enough apart so the barrel does not tip during exercises. Don't underestimate the motion in a good swing, or the pull of a vaulter who flips over in a handstand.

Please don't succumb too much to making your barrel horse 'cute': tails are fine...but I have seen pointed wooden ears on some – an absolute nonsense, because your vaulters can seriously injure themselves, if they come down hard on them.

