

## COVER STORY The Big Freeze

# Everything's off — but fun

**W**EEKS of solid ground, snow and ice have put paid to almost all horse sport in the UK.

Lauren Humphries of Arena UK in Grantham said: "We had to cancel our show for last weekend [10 January], which was a big qualifier for Hickstead. First, the car park was like a skating rink — I could sell tickets for it — and second, people couldn't get their horses out here."

Tim Price of Addington Manor, in Bucks, said: "We haven't been able to hold any dressage since before Christmas and our three show jumping days have been a disaster because we haven't had enough people."

"The government makes us pay for a passport for our horses, so it should be making sure the roads are clear for us."

Oldencraig in Surrey has cancelled all its shows, too.

Owner Ian Winfield, said: "As far as the horses are concerned we're having a bit of trouble with their water as it keeps freezing. We've been taking buckets of water from the house tap and topping them up, which is making life hard."

"Fortunately, we have an indoor school, lungeing arena and horse-walker so exercising the horses hasn't been too much of a problem, which helps immensely as we cannot turn any of the horses out."

### £10,000 in lost lessons

SOME riding schools are not doing much better.

John Sillett, general manager of Wellington Riding in Hampshire, said the weather has cost them around £10,000 in cancelled lessons.

"We're at the epicentre of all the bad weather. We have two indoor schools so we've been able to exercise our horses, but we've had to cancel our lessons. To make things worse, we had a power cut that lasted for three days."

Racing has been severely affected (see Marcus Armytage's comment, p6) and showing is also a victim of the snow.

Derbyshire-based show pony owner Camilla Bedford is chasing qualifications for the Ponies UK Southern Winter Championships (21-22 March).

She had hoped to get Exmoor Penbryndhu Trixie Dixie to producer Fiona Harrison at Mendlesham,



**Stallion Cash Point** enjoys some time off at the Meadow Stud, Glos



**What can I do?:** Wolverhampton clerk of the course Fergus Cameron is at a loss

Suffolk, before Christmas, but both yards are snowbound.

"Fiona needs him soon or we'll never get him qualified," said Mrs Bedford, "but it's far too dangerous to venture out with the trailer."

### Hunts hope for respite

AND hunts are soldiering on — on foot and quad bike — since the weather has made riding to hounds impossible.

The Ludlow has not been

mounted since 15 December, but continues to meet on foot to exercise hounds.

"It's pretty grim," said joint-master Bob Smith. "We have about 6in of snow, but it's the ground that's the killer."

"I just hope it goes away before the end of the season."

Feed merchants have reported a run on feed and bedding on those days when clients can get to their stores. White Horse Animal Feeds in Wantage, Oxon, said it was unable to get deliveries for two days last week.

"We've had some madly busy days in the last few weeks," said sales assistant Debbie Wallis.

Elsewhere, *H&H* readers have been making the best of the seasonal weather. Here is a selection of your pictures, taken during the "big freeze".