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Riders jumping for joy at competition success

By RUTH LOGNONNE

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FOUR members of South Northumberland Pony Club are jumping for joy after qualifying for a major national show jumping competition.

Laura Frisby (18), Gemma Burvill (15), Emily Rowell (17) and Susie White (13) will all compete at the prestigious Pony Club Winter League Show Jumping and Dressage Championships at the weekend.

The championships are being held at Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell, tomorrow and Sunday.

The girls will be joined by fellow member Suzanne Barber (20), who qualified for the national dressage finals on Sunday.

The championships are the pinnacle of the Dengie Winter League for around 200 Pony Club competitors who have been taking part in qualifiers, at novice and open level, during the winter months.

Over 300 preliminary rounds have been staged, accommodating a substantial 5,000 competitors, with successful riders battling it out at one of 19 area finals in a bid to claim their golden ticket to the coveted national event.



■ Riding high: Pony Club members Laura Frisby and Emily Rowell with Rielly.

Emily, who finished third in her area qualifiers at Holmside Hall, County Durham, will be competing in the novice event tomorrow.

Although excited to be taking part, Emily admits that qualifying

with her sister's horse Rielly was a bit of an accident.

"He's Rebecca's horse and she only got him last year," she said. "She was supposed to be riding him at the qualifiers but she got an

injury and I had to step in at the last minute.

"It was the first time I'd ever jumped him at a competition and we ended up qualifying for the finals."

This won't be the first time Emily's mother, Wendy, has experienced a nail-biting trip to these particular national show jumping finals.

She said: "My eldest, Rebecca, qualified and went down there a few years ago."

The Dengie Winter League Show Jumping was first introduced in 1995 and has become an iconic starting point for grassroots show jumpers in the Pony Club.

The introduction of the open level show jumping in 2006 has also allowed more advanced members the chance to tackle bigger fences.

The youngest of South Northumberland's competitors, Susie, is the only member to have qualified for the open finals and will be tackling fences as high as one metre 15ins in the final jump-off.

The Dengie Winter League Dressage was introduced in 2007, and has gone on to quickly gain equal status to the show jumping, with many of its grassroots competitors going on to enjoy success at the Pony Club championships in the summer.

RSPCA in crisis over neglected horses

THE growing numbers of horses being reported as abandoned or neglected is putting the RSPCA under pressure as never before.

The charity is dealing with large numbers of dead or dying horses being dumped in remote spots and horses placed in RSPCA care because their owners are accused of cruelty and neglect.

Today, the RSPCA is boarding 227 horses in the North of England alone which are subject to on-going

investigations, almost all of which are in private establishments at a cost of between £10-£15 per day.

This figure doesn't include veterinary or farrier care.

Cathy Hyde, equine officer for the North of England, said: "We seem to be seeing more and more dead and dying horses dumped off the back of trailers in secluded areas, their owners unwilling or unable to pay for veterinary treatment or a 'knackerman' to dispose of their

body.

"Irresponsible owners and traders can't care for or sell the stock they already have but are continuing to breed. When those animals suffer, or their needs aren't met, organisations like the RSPCA are left to pick up the pieces.

"We are, quite honestly, struggling to keep up with what is a mounting crisis."

The situation is at its worst in the North of England.

Cathy said: "Our inspectors are picking up horse case after horse case across the region.

"Where veterinary advice supports the fact that animals are suffering, we act immediately to remove them, but that leaves us with the insurmountable problem of hundreds of horses whose care we fund for many months and even years until their owners are prosecuted or agree to sign them over so they can go to new homes."

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