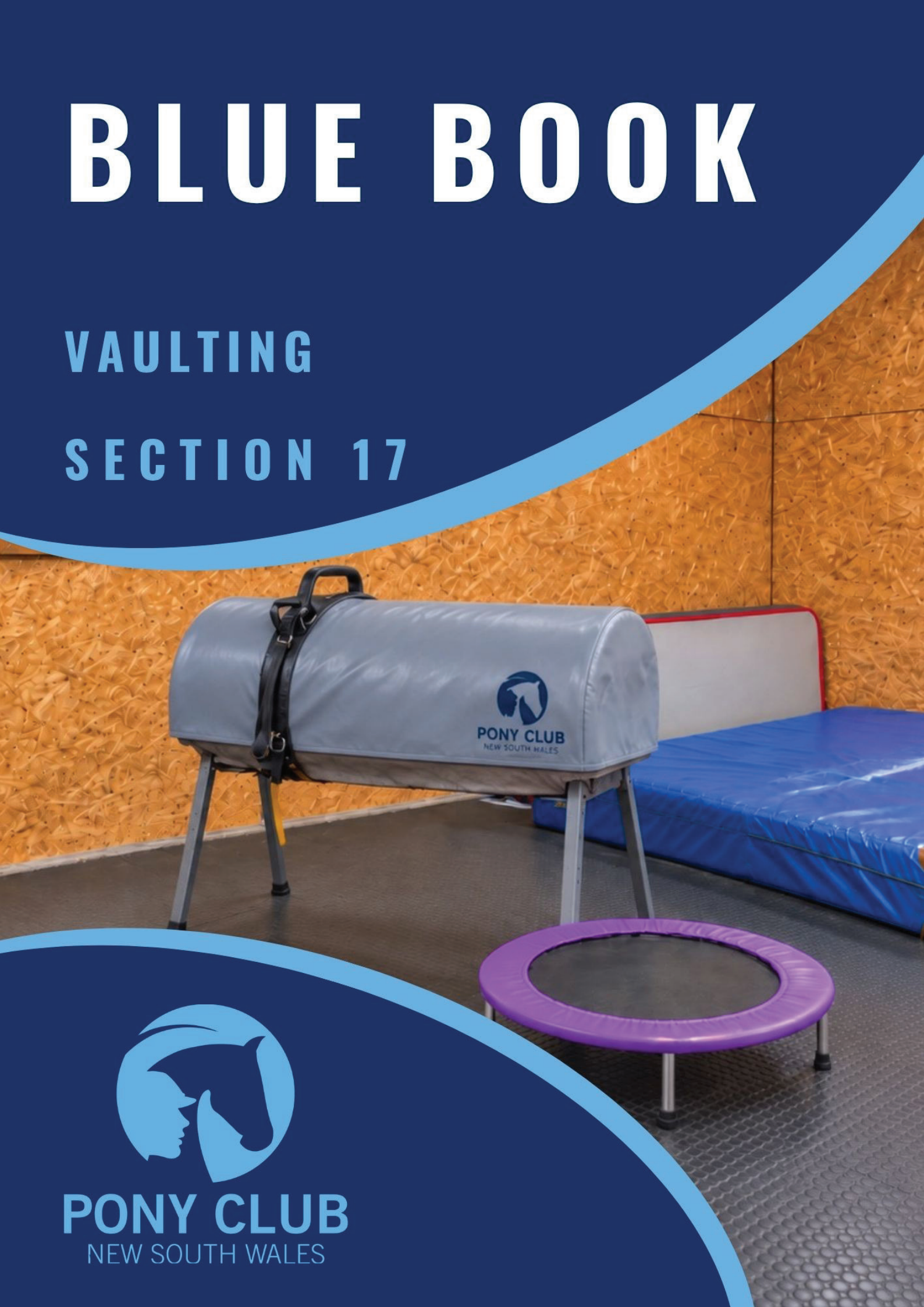
BLUE BOOK

VAULTING

SECTION 17



PONY CLUB
NEW SOUTH WALES

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PONY CLUB ASSOCIATION OF N.S.W. VAULTING

Vaulting is the sport of gymnastics on the moving horse. It is used in the mastering of equestrian sport and dates back to the training of warriors by ancient civilizations such as the Minoans.

Throughout history vaulting has been used to train horsemen to achieve agility, balance and strength. It is currently used in many European countries to introduce young people to riding. Many continue with the sport until they reach world championships where vaulting is one of the five F.E.I. equestrian disciplines contested every three years.

Vaulting can be a useful addition to general pony club activities in many ways. Not only will the intrinsic physical benefits become rapidly apparent but also the psychological benefits such as increased confidence and enhanced self-esteem from the ability to progress quickly through the early phases of the sport. As a team sport member work closely together solving problems, creating new movements and learn to generate complete trust in one another as each will be responsible for the others' safety on numerous occasions.

As with general gymnastics, co-ordination, balance, suppleness, strength, and agility continue to be challenged as the vaulters go further and tackle the more difficult movements. Initial training is done at the walk with competition mostly at the canter as it is easier than the trot. Possession of natural talent will result in spectacular progress. However, one of the most appealing aspects of vaulting is that almost anyone can achieve most of the basic movements in a very short time.

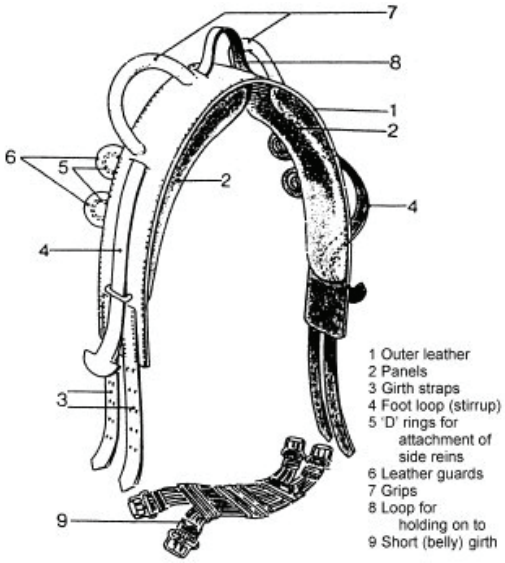
For a rainy-day activity vaulting can be practiced in a shed or clubhouse using a static drum. It is also useful for clubs with a shortage of instructors or area in which to work, as one instructor and an area half the size of a dressage arena will suffice.

Perhaps one of the most important advantages of vaulting is the increase in general safety This is a result of riders learning how to fall and not injure themselves and becoming proficient in recovering their balance from awkward situations. Learning to tumble and roll gives confidence, defeats the fear of a fall and increases substantially the riders' area of balance. In Europe and America vaulting competitions are conducted almost every weekend.

1. EQUIPMENT

A very valuable and useful piece of equipment is a gymnastic vaulting horse. The dimensions to build such a horse from a 200 litre drum appear below. It is padded with carpet or similar material and a substitute for handles can be made by placing the roller around the drum. This is used for the majority of training, experimentation and refining of technique. One of these goes a long way in saving the horse's back.

Construction of a Vaulting Barrel



The equipment used on the horse includes the lunge rein, Cavesson (optional), bridle, side reins, roller, and back pad. A lunge whip is also required.

Lunge rein — must be of good quality with the attachment being a snap hook or leather buckle. The leather buckle type is preferable as it is less likely to come undone accidentally.

Cavesson — is the standard three ring type. The bridging across the nose should not be rigid but flexible as it needs to fit very firmly. The strap under the jaw should be padded and adjusted so as not to allow any slip on the face. The throat lash should be firm enough to draw cheek straps away from the eye but must be set below the jowl. The middle ring should always be able to swivel in the nose band.

Bridle — a snaffle bridle with a drop noseband can be used with or without the Cavesson. The lunge rein can be attached straight through the rings of the bit and fastened to the outside ring.

Roller — if no other can be found the cheaper Indian type will suffice. However, the following shows the design for a competition roller which is essential for serious training.

Back pad — must cover the horse from neck to hips and be made of substantially shock absorbent material. The underneath surface should be of a moisture absorbent cloth and the upper surface should be of a non-slip type (leather has been found to be suitable). Above all the pad should be made from a substantially Shock absorbent material.

Lunge whip — is necessary for maintaining the horse on a true circle and controlling the pace.

Side reins — are used to encourage the horse to maintain a steady even pace.

Gymnastics equipment — various pieces of equipment can be used for training purposes. However, it is advisable to have the services of a knowledgeable gymnastics coach to teach Techniques which can be utilized for vaulting.

The vaulting horse — it is important to carefully consider the horse to be used for vaulting as the wrong conformation or temperament will mean much time wasted.

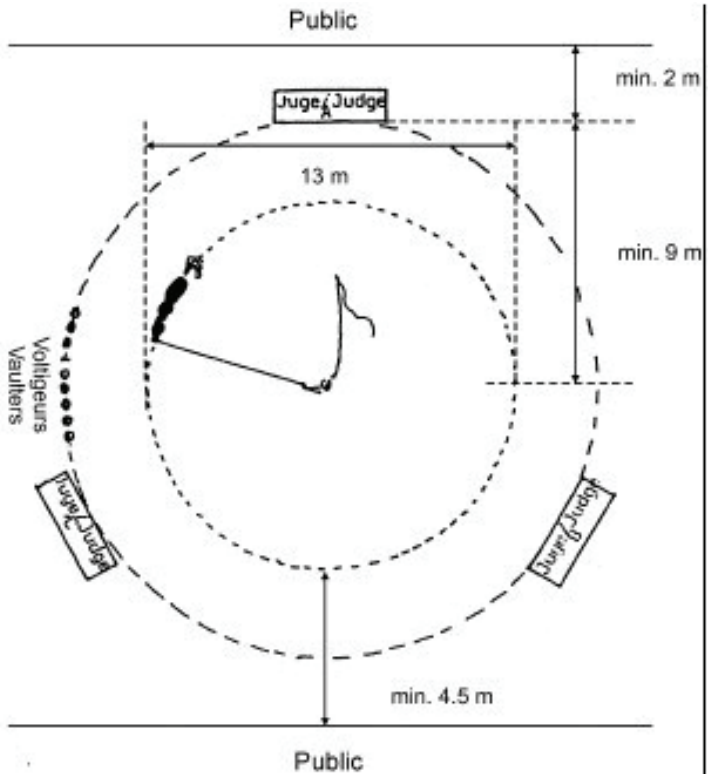
The horse is not necessary to commence vaulting. While a suitable horse is being trained the riders can commence training on the gymnastics horse or barrel. Acquisition of a suitable horse is usually not too difficult. With a little sorting out and sensible training no great problem should be encountered in finding at least one or two suitable horses within the average pony club. The primary consideration is that the horse will good-naturedly tolerate or resign itself to anything which occurs on his back.

Size should be 15 – 17 hands as this is ideal to allow for team work where 2 or 3 riders work on the horse at any one time.

Conformation — horse should tend to be broad in the back and be well balanced. The ability to canter on the circle is important as the horse will be able to take vaulters through all levels of competition. Good gait and a well-set neck are an advantage. A high croup with the tail set low indicates a strong back which may lead to avoiding future problems.

The vaulting arena — the arena needs a shock absorbent surface and be firm and flat. A combination of sand and sawdust is ideal. The following diagram shows the dimensions of a competition arena. Care should be taken to ensure that the horse does not lunge too close to the wall or solid objects so as to allow vaulters to tumble and roll off the horse.

VAULTING ARENA/PISTE DE VOLTIGE



Clothing — should be of stretch type material to allow freedom of movement, e.g. jodhpurs or track suit pants. Loose flapping clothing, jewelry of any kind and long hair not tied back are all hazardous and must not be permitted.

Pony Club riders training in vaulting must wear approved ASNZS, ASTM, and EN protective headwear when working with the horse. It is recommended that this headwear be worn when learning on the "wooden horse" also.

Safety — is the responsibility of the instructors to ensure the vaulters do not progress too rapidly and put themselves at risk through lack of experience.

2. TRAINING

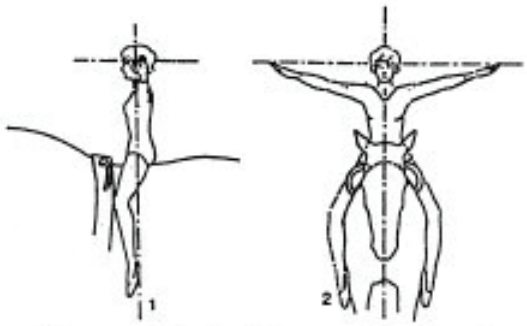
The horse is taught to lunge quietly with balance and rhythm. The next step is to accustom the horse to the vaulters both on its back and on the ground moving with the horse while it is moving.

One of the most difficult stages is to teach the horse to ignore the vaulters and respond only to the commands of the lunger. The lunger is solely responsible for the behaviour of the horse and it is critical that the lunger keeps the horse going smoothly. Vaulters walk with the horse on the lunge staying close by the shoulder of the horse and keeping one hand on the handle of the roller, until the horse learns the vaulters are not asking for any response and he need not pay attention to them.

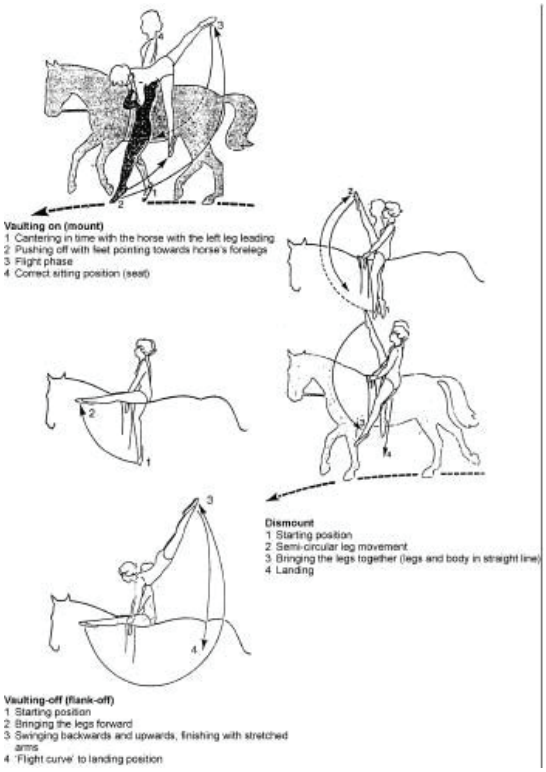
Mounting is initially attempted at the walk with a leg up from a second person. Very agile vaulters may be able to mount without assistance at the walk. However, primary consideration must always be given to avoiding stress and discomfort to the horse. Once accustomed to this the horse can be pushed on to trot and canter. Canter is a far easier pace to vault than trot.

Therefore, only as little time as necessary should be spent at the trot.

As vaulting progresses, the horse's degree of tolerance should increase whilst any sensitivity is lessened if training is done correctly. It is always a good idea to give consistency in training to allow the horse to become accustomed to the same person lunging each session. It is preferable that the instructor is not the one to lunge as it is very difficult to coach and effectively control the horse at the same time. However, with any horse sport it is wise to expect the unexpected and never take the horse's kind and calm nature for granted. Vaulters should be trained to have "an emergency exit" planned and practiced for every movement.



1 and 2 correct basic sitting position (basic seat)

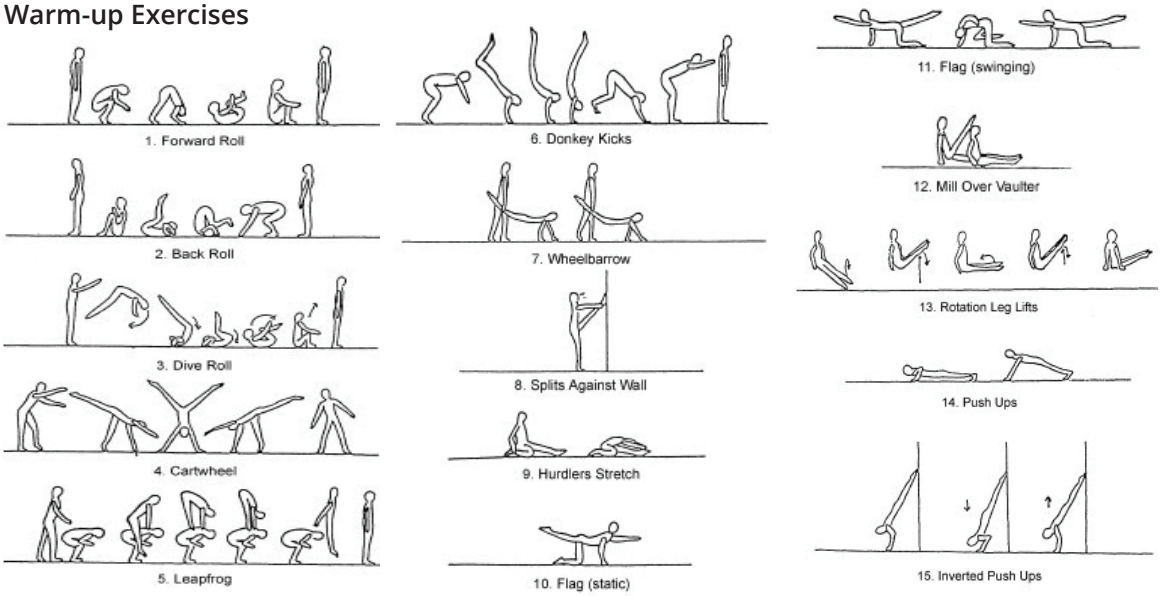


3. VAULTERS

Warm-up exercises are a must as they greatly reduce the risk of injury. Fitness is also important, and vaulters should be encouraged to pursue a personal fitness program. Work on the barrel and games are also valuable for warm-up exercises and about 20-30 minutes

should suffice. Advice from a gymnastics instructor, sports physiotherapist or other competent person is ideal. The following are some examples of warm-up exercises.

Warm-up Exercises



In order to progress further, and learn the various movements, it is advisable to obtain one of the books listed below.

1. Vaulting The Official Instruction Handbook of the German National Equestrian Federation. Threshold books 1987.
2. Vaulting The Art of Gymnastics on the Moving Horse. Elizabeth Friedlaender. The Stephen Greene Press
3. Rules for Vaulting Events
   The official Rules of the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) 2023,2024