

Expert advice

Q&A

YOUR TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND HEALTH QUESTIONS ANSWERED. **THIS ISSUE:** MUDDY ROADS, WHEEL TRUING, ROLLER BRAKES, BAD HIPS, AND MORE



Farmers must remove or warn about mud



MEET THE EXPERTS



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Left: Graham Turner / Alamy

Legal

MUD ON THE ROAD

Q I recently fell off my road bike on a country lane after riding into a large stretch of wet mud leading from a farmer's field. It was all over the road so I couldn't avoid it. I'm more or less okay, but I've written off the bike's left-hand STI. One of my clubmates took a photo of the scene with his mobile phone.

Aren't farmers meant to clear up stuff like this? It didn't look like it had just happened, as the shape of the tractor's tyre tracks wasn't well defined, and there had been heavy overnight rain before our morning club ride. Is there anything I can do?

Name & address supplied

A Mud on the road is a common occurrence, especially on country roads surrounding farms. This can be especially hazardous to cyclists and motorbike riders.

The initial hurdle individuals may face is identifying which farmer left the mud on the road. This may be easier to determine if there is a nearby farm/field. Many farmers require the use of public roads to transport produce, equipment and other materials.

Councils and Local Authorities routinely encourage farmers to clean up any mud/obstructions caused by their vehicles and livestock, or to place adequate, authorised signs to notify other road users of the danger. Not doing so because it is economically inconvenient is not a reasonable defence in law. This is due to the fact that if any person without lawful authority or excuse deposits matter onto the highway, and that matter causes an interruption or a danger to other road users, that person is guilty of an offence under Section 148 and Section 161 of the Highways Act 1980. The consequences could

range from a fine to imprisonment.

If it appears that the farmer isn't going to clean up the mess any time soon, one option you could pursue is to report the danger to your local Highways Authority. Under Section 149 of the Highways Act 1980, the Highways Authority has the power to clean up the road and recover expenses from the parties responsible. This may be dealt with quickly, depending on the type of road that has the obstruction. Busier roads will receive more attention because the risk of an incident occurring is much higher. If the farmer fails to remove the mud in a reasonable time after this notification, the Highways Authority itself may be liable for any damage/injury.

You may also be able to pursue a civil claim against the farmer concerned – particularly where you have suffered a significant injury. In this instance, thank goodness you appear to have suffered mainly damage to your bike. In the last issue of Cycle (Feb/Mar 18, p60), I set out how to proceed in such circumstances.

Richard Gaffney



Twin USB light charging – most likely more slowly

Technical RECHARGING LIGHTS

Q Over winter, I find I'm recharging my lights more and more often. This is fine from home – I can use my laptop to charge both at once in order not to have to wait for one after the other before going to bed. But while touring, I have only a compact camera charger. I would need two chargers to do both lights simultaneously. I've seen twin chargers for phones and tablets but lights are not mentioned. My camera charger output is 5V 800mA. Is this optimum for bike lights? Christopher Lycett

A The fine detail of USB technology occupies a lengthy Wikipedia page, but the salient points are that USB port output is a nominal 5V, which will charge any device supplied with a USB connector cable, and that USB power adaptors supply current

as required by the charging device, generally from 500mA up, in some cases, to 2A, per port. Current – in amps – determines the rate of charging, and a battery's capacity the time taken to charge it at a given rate. The Exposure Strada 800's own dedicated charger supplies 1.5A, so two Strada 800 lights connected to a twin port charger capable of supplying 3A should charge in the usual time. Depending on the lights you use and the time you reach your digs, a 2A twin charger might still charge your lights by bedtime.

Richard Hallett

Technical TRUE OR FALSE?

Q What would be the acceptable limit when truing a wheel for a bike with rim brakes? I hate truing wheels and I'm pretty rubbish at it, but I like to do all my own repairs. The wheel went out of true and I adjusted it, first making it a little better, then making it worse. I've now got it running within 1mm to 1.25mm. Is this acceptable or do I need to have another go?

francovendee, via the forum

A Since it's your bike and you're doing the work, you get to decide whether you have done an acceptable job... You might conclude it's fine, provided the rim doesn't touch either block during a wheel revolution, and you can't sense the wobble when riding. Radial

run-out feels worse than side-to-side – and is for many people harder to cure. Consider buying an authoritative book on the subject, such as Gerd Schraner's The Art of Wheelbuilding.

Richard Hallett

Technical TRYING BRAKES

Q For 20 years, I rode a Gazelle city bike to work and covered around 25,000miles on it. Very reliable and comfortable it was, so on retirement I bought another, a Tour Populaire. Everything is better except the Shimano roller brakes, which are ineffective. I have tried running them in for nine months, but no change. I tried some of Shimano's special grease, but again: no change. Can I improve them? Should I try fitting a disc brake onto the front? Or maybe a rim brake? Changing the hubs looks difficult and expensive.

Nick Clatworthy

A new brake can be fitted to an existing roller brake hub



A Shimano Multi-Condition roller brakes seem to divide opinion, with some users liking their all-weather commuting capability even as others damn them for limited effectiveness, erratic performance, and finicky service requirements. The basic design employs three steel shoes, which are pressed against the inside of the steel drum by rollers on a cam plate turned by the actuating arm. The steel-to-steel braking surfaces need lubrication with a special grease to prevent seizure. Dragging a roller brake for prolonged periods or using it at speed on a steep descent can boil the grease, leaving the braking surfaces damaged and prone either to snatch or not work at all.

Not knowing which outcome is more likely does little for user confidence. Some reports suggest that a brake that has overheated can't be restored to full power by replacing the grease. A roller-brake-compatible hub also incorporates a 'power modulator' designed to limit maximum braking power



Even disc brake wheels need truing

Hip hardware. The gamma nail is in the middle

Right: Agencia Fotograficzna Caro / Alamy




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and prevent wheel lock up...

The good news is that the roller brake is a self-contained unit, attached to its hub via a splined interface, and can be replaced without major disturbance to the wheel. There are several versions, with the most expensive offering greater braking power and additional cooling fins. If you don't fancy simply replacing the brake, one option might be to substitute a Sturmey Archer drum brake, although this would need a complete new wheel. Changing the front wheel only would keep costs down. To fit a disc or rim brake, you would need to find a way to mount the hardware.

Richard Hallett

Health
GAMMA NAIL REMOVAL

Q I broke my hip about three years ago and had a gamma nail fitted to fix the fracture. The screw that holds the nail that fits laterally into the head of the femur is causing me pain. I can't sleep on my right side and spurts of intense cycling (like a spinning or tackling a climb at pace) cause pain the next day. Is it worth having the gamma nail removed to relieve the pain? I'd be interested to know of any complications and the length of the rehabilitation process.
mishinator, via the forum

A A gamma nail is inserted to fix certain types of fracture of the neck of the femur (thigh bone). These are commonly referred to as hip fractures. It consists of a large screw placed in the head of the femur and a nail, which goes down the middle of the shaft of femur.

Usually, the gamma nail will remain in place permanently, even after the fracture has healed. However, metalwork can sometimes cause pain or discomfort, particularly when a force is put on it, or in certain positions. Depending on how troublesome the pain is, the gamma nail can be removed. This is a decision which should ultimately be taken with your orthopaedic surgeon, after weighing up the pros and cons.

Removal is usually a straightforward day-case procedure, and there is a good chance your pain will be improved. However, as always, there are possible complications, and these include re-fracture of the bone and wound infection. In addition, a number of factors influence how easily the nail can be removed, including the length of time it has been in and whether bone has overgrown the end of it. The hole left by removal of the nail will refill with new bone, which forms over several weeks. You will probably be advised to avoid high impact

activities during the first couple of months, but stationary and gentle cycling is usually permitted – check with your surgeon.

Matt Brooks

Technical
FLATS TO DROPS

Q I have a Ridgeback with flat bars that I'm changing to drops. The bike has full-size V-brakes. I have an old set of Sora STI levers (9-speed). If I go down this route, should I use travel adapters with the existing V-brakes, buy a set of mini V-brakes, or a set of cantilever brakes. Or should I go down the route of buying drop-bar brakes that work with V-brakes and buy a set of 9 speed bar-end shifters as well? Cost is a factor.

Martinn, via the forum

A Any of the options laid out would work. Opting for cantilevers would be straightforward, provided you can install a suitable rear cable hanger (if the frame does not have one). If the bike has a threadless headset, the front hanger will need an integral clamp to grip the steerer tube, otherwise brake application will compress the head bearing and stiffen or even lock the steering. Mini V-brakes (Cycle Oct/Nov 16) would be an even simpler installation, provided the arms of the model chosen give sufficient tyre and mudguard clearance; arms longer than 85mm can give a very spongy feel.

Travel Agent-style pull adaptors ideally need braided cable to avoid potential problems with fatigue, and they add complexity. That said, I currently run full-length linear-pull brakes with Tektro RL520 levers and Shimano bar-end shifters on my 650B utility bike as an alternative to STIs and cantilevers.

Richard Hallett



To fit cantilevers you'll need hangers, like this Funky Monkey from Paul Components

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