

A month before the HI, we took part in our first FEI 1\* at Kings Forest, where we sailed round at 15.5kph to come 16th out of a very large class (and 4<sup>th</sup> of the British riders) – Kareem felt on fine form and definitely ready to take on his next challenge.

The next few weeks were mainly spent organising entries, stabling, team clothing, etc - the list goes on! This is where the West Riding bursary really helped, as the cost of all these was not insignificant. Kareem also had a last check by the physio a few days before travelling, and was declared fit and ready to go.

On arriving at the venue, our horses were to be checked by the vet and the physio as soon as possible, to get a better idea of how each horse was looking. This is, unfortunately, where our season's run of good luck ended; Kareem was found to have a slightly sore back. This was extra disappointing as I knew he'd been fine just a few days ago and he hadn't even been ridden since, so we concluded that he must have slipped in the field and pulled a muscle – bad timing Kareem!

The management team were so supportive, trying their very best to iron out the muscle tweak as quickly as possible (we certainly got our money's worth out of the physio!) and help us decide on the best way forward. Although his back was very much improved with only a couple of treatments I, in agreement with the management, felt it best to save him for another day. All was not lost though, as we were still able to join in the team parade and vetting, then successfully pootle round the 32km class in all our England gear.

So, even though our Home International debut did not go to plan, we still got a lot out of the experience and I feel the support and advice offered by the team chef, vet and physio will benefit me greatly for future rides. I am also, of course, very grateful to the West Riding committee for awarding us one of this year's bursaries – they are most definitely worth applying for.