

ANY QUESTION

ANSWERED ✓

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does

Spongy rear brake on your Multistrada? Could be down to overheating fluid



OWNING & RIDING

Q How can I stop my spongy brakes being such a bleedin' pain?

The rear brake on my 2010 Ducati Multistrada is so soft and lacking in feel that I can get the pedal onto its stop and the ABS still won't kick in. I've seen a fix that suggests air gathers in the ABS unit and I should fit a bleed nipple on the unit itself. Does that sound plausible?
Andrew Phillips, Bristol

Answered by Richard Llewellyn, Louigi Moto
It's not ideal, because the ABS control unit is right up under the saddle and you have to drill a hole in the saddle base to get it to fit. If you follow Ducati's guidelines and remove the caliper so it's above the master cylinder it's possible to get enough air out to harden it up.

If the sponginess persists, that's probably because some old fluid behind the caliper pistons is not getting flushed through during the bleed. The older the brake fluid is, the more susceptible it is to overheating. If it boils it induces air bubbles and a spongy feel. It's for that reason we remove and strip the calipers on most

bikes during a major service to clean out the contaminated fluid. Use a brake fluid with a high boiling point, as the Multistrada's master cylinder is located close to the exhaust, which means the fluid can get too hot even before you use the brake. We use Putoline Ultimate Racing Brake Fluid in our road and race bikes.



A supply issue that has held up the VFR1200 recall should soon be fixed

Q Should I be worried about my shaftdrive?

I've recently heard about a worldwide recall for all the different versions of the Honda VFR1200 to replace a universal joint in the shaftdrive. It's rather preying on my mind as I crank over into another sweeper. Should I be worried?
James Mill, Shrewsbury

Answered by Scott Bullett, Doble Motorcycles

The recall was triggered after there had been some isolated cases of universal joints seizing and snapping. The fix is a modified drive-shaft, but they are in short supply, as global demand is running ahead of production. Instead, batches of bikes are being recalled in each market for dealers to test for free movement. We hang a weight off one end of the shaft to do this, but the only one that's failed so far was obviously notchy before we got near it with the test weight.

If it fails the test, Honda moves that bike to the front of the queue and it gets the new part within 72 hours.

This short supply situation should be easing by mid-March and every bike will get a modified shaft, which should be checked every 6000 miles going forward.

Fortunately, there are plenty of warning signs if you think your bike might be one of the unlucky ones; increased vibration, especially through the footpegs, plus more noise than normal from the drivetrain.

Q What's good sports rubber for a GSX-R600?

I took MCN's advice last year and got a Suzuki GSX-R600 L0 that I've put plenty of miles on (thanks). Now I'm looking at new tyres. How do you guys rate the Bridgestone BT-016 Pros that are already on it?
Darren Homewood, email

Answered by Michael Neeves, MCN Senior Road Tester

The Bridgestone BT-016 Pro are old-generation all-round sports tyres. Since then, Bridgestone have released the S20 and S20 Evo and now there's a new S21 that we've yet to test. Sports tyre evolution has moved on so much recently and Metzeler Sportec M7 RR and Pirelli's new Diablo Rosso III are now at the top of the tree, with high levels of wet and dry grip, confidence, agility, stability and durability.



Find the right rubber and get even more joy from your GSX-R600

Q Where can I find boots for my slightly fat feet?

I'm a pretty regular sized bloke at 5ft 11in, but my size 10 feet are too wide to get a pair of boots to fit. Even Alt-Berg only supply two rather bland and short styles now, so I am reduced to a £25 pair of Aldi boots. Are there other options?
Martin Read, email

Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles

The only footwear I can find for you that may work off the shelf are Daytona Road Star GTX Wides. They are about 1cm wider than regular Road Stars, which I find quite wide for my own feet in regular format. They're not cheap at £330 but you are getting a seriously good quality product which will last for years and can be re-soled at the Daytona factory. Go to www.tranam.co.uk for your nearest dealer.

TRAVEL & TOURING

Q Want to get some cheap thrills on a Euro-thrash?

Answered by Andy Davidson, MCN's adventure specialist

Here are my top five European destinations. Route Napoleon tops the list. It's about 746 miles from Calais and will cost you about £90 in fuel to get there. It stretches from the French Riviera and Cannes up into the Alps and onto Grenoble. It's a stunning ride with endless switchbacks, little traffic and well maintained Tarmac. Option number two is the Ardennes and the Eifel. It's

closer to Calais at 172 miles and is European countryside at its best. Valleys, old castles and charming villages pop up around every corner. And if you get bored, you're only a short ride from the infamous Nürburgring. Option number three is the Antrim coast road, one of the world's most beautiful motorcycling routes and it's right on our doorstep. As if that's not enough, it's also home to the legendary North West 200 race, held every May. Option four is

the Stelvio Pass, the highest paved mountain pass in the Eastern Alps. Peppered with 60 hairpin turns, the gorgeous road carves its way through alpine backdrops along sweeping turns. And finally, there's the Grossglockner. The epic road leads you high into Austria's mountain ranges, with non-stop hairpin turns. Prepare yourself for magnificent panoramic views of the mighty Grossglockner itself, Austria's highest mountain, and all for just £90 in petrol.



With roads like this, we can forgive Europe its dodgy pop music

TECH WATCH

Q How clever can bikes get?

Electromagnetic pulses count spokes in ABS rings, measuring speeds. The ECU uses the info to activate its ABS system, and feeds the data into a map of engine management, and traction and anti-wheelie control. It also delivers road speed to the clocks.

Piezoelectric detectors listen for detonation inside combustion chambers. The ECU uses this, plus information from the exhaust's lambda sensor, engine speed, gear position, throttle position and inlet manifold pressure sensors, to set the best fuel/air mixture for power, fuel economy and emissions.

Meanwhile, four accelerometers measure the rate of change of acceleration, letting the ECU back-

calculate suspension stroke speed and the best damping settings to manage it. A gyro might be looking at lean angle and telling the ECU that in Rain mode, at a 48° lean, when the rider asks for power, it's good to give him less than he wants.

The ECU also looks for dropped information. If a BMW sensor misses a beat, the error is logged and transmitted to a Berlin server every time the bike gets plugged into a dealer's diagnostics. And not just fault codes – data like traction control activation time and maximum revs are also stored and transmitted to BMW HQ.

Now it all gets a bit dystopian. Your ABS, gear position, revs, fuel consumption, even speed, could be recorded and sent to the factory. The manufacturer would know exactly how customers ride their bikes: when they change gear, how fast they go, how many wheelies they pull...



Your bike's brain will probably end up way bigger than yours

The next step is a bike that can predict the future. GPS-based mapping will grade roads for bumps and set suspension accordingly, or alter engine characteristics to suit urban, motorway, country road or track environments. Braking could be augmented by proximity sensors, and so could cornering angles. And with traction control, ABS and steering assist, your massively brainy bike would be all but uncrashable anyway. How clever is that?

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

Q Who is to blame for my costly supermarket slip-up?

Although the forecourt of a supermarket petrol station on the site of a big branch had been gritted, the access road was untreated and I dropped my bike on a patch of ice lurking by a mini-roundabout. I didn't do a great deal of damage to the bike but it was new so I'm not best pleased that there's a massive scuff. Can I make the council pay?
James R, email

Snow and ice claims can be difficult and are very different depending on who was responsible for the mini-roundabout. The local authority is only responsible for 'adopted' roads. It sounds like the road you are referring to may not be adopted and could be the responsibility of the supermarket, particularly if the road goes back through their car park. If the local authority is responsible

'The local authority is not required to keep all roads clear at all times'

for the road, then, as with their responsibility for potholes and other obstructions, they are not required to keep all roads clear at all times, and as long as they have a reasonable system of inspection and clearance that will be a full defence to a claim such as yours.

If the road belongs to the supermarket, a claim may have better prospects. They are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that anyone using the petrol station is able to do so safely and the fact that they have gritted the forecourt would seem to suggest they were aware of that and have taken steps to prevent it being too slippery. If they have subsequently failed to grit the road in and out, for which they are also responsible, then that would seem to be negligent and you may well succeed against them.



Andrew Campbell
Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

Andrew Campbell, **Bikela**yer. Visit www.bikelawyer.co.uk or email andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk or call 01446 794169

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Q What's the best choice of jeans for riding this summer?

I'm looking for some riding jeans for the summer. What should I look for?
Jamie Anderson, Croxford

Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles

Look for something that will feel comfortable on the bike and look good off it. Most come with pockets for hip armour as a £20 optional extra, but make sure you check the armour for fit and comfort on the bike before you buy. The Oxford SP-J2 jeans are a good

budget option. They come with a Kevlar lining and knee armour in a regular fashion cut. The Bull-it SR4s come in various shades and use Covec as their abrasion-resistant material. You don't get any armour (there are pockets) but you do get a water-repellent finish

Route One Huntsmans give you both knee armour and water-resistance in a pleasant Kevlar-lined loose-fitting cut.

Finally, the oddly-named Dainese Prattvilles are another pair to come with armour pockets and Kevlar lining.

