

ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a problem? MCN's team of specialists has the answers



GENERAL
Bryn Phillips
Works in product support at Cambrian Tyres, the UK's biggest trade tyre supplier



YAMAHA
Stuart Gaines
Senior Technician at Yamaha dealership A2 Motorcycle Centre in Gravesend



HONDA
Scott Bullett
Workshop manager and a Honda-approved diagnostic technician at Dobbies



TRIUMPH
Adrian Clancy
Worked as a head mechanic in New York and now at Total Triumph in Taunton

I am in my first year on two wheels and thoroughly enjoying it, and intend to ride through the winter. The rubber on my Yamaha YZF-R125 is ready for replacement, so I am looking for a pair of well-priced tyres that can take me through the winter with some confidence.

A Your Yamaha uses commonly available 100/80-17 and 130/70-17 sizes, but there's a big difference in price between some brands that heavily influences sales. Michelin and Continental have produced tyres especially for the 50cc-300cc market (Pilot Street and Twist SM respectively) and their prices are 20%-30% lower than the other manufacturers' tyres (around £150 per pair for both).

Of course, tyres like Bridgestone's BT45 and Pirelli's Sport Demon are as good in wet and cold conditions but in this price-sensitive sector of the market the reality is that the Michelins and Contis (around £100 per pair) are the big sellers.

However, some Golden Tire GT260 tyres in these sizes have become available in the UK. The GT260s are keenly-priced road-legal replicas of race wets and should give the best performance of all over the colder, wetter months.

Golden Tire may not be a name that road riders are familiar with but they have been involved in the motocross world for many years and these GT260s (£90 a pair) are actually produced by a manufacturer in Korea that also makes some tyres for another big-name manufacturer.

Bryn Phillips, Cambrian Tyres



Which cheap tyres will keep me safe and sound in winter?

JACK EDMUNDS, EMAIL

You can shod your R125 in confidence-boosting rubber from £90

Will a Power Commander give Hornet more sting?

Q I fancy fitting exhaust header pipes with no catalytic converter on my Honda CB600F Hornet. Do I need to get the ECU remapped or a Power Commander fitted? Davie Henderson, Facebook

A Junking the cats means the exhaust will be a lot more free-flowing. A standard ECU can cope with a bit of change, but you may need a Power Commander. But you can do a plug chop before and after the exhaust pipe change, to see what the mixture is like at the mid to top-end of the revs. A plug chop allows you to 'freeze' the engine's combustion characteristics at a given revs out on the road to see what the mixture is doing.

To do a plug chop you need the bike to be in third or fourth gear at about 8000-9000 revs for several seconds, then pull in the clutch and flick the killswitch to stop the engine before freewheeling to a halt somewhere safe, such as a layby.

You will need a plug spanner, heat-resistant gloves and a spanner to loosen the fuel tank. Once you've removed the plug, its tip should be a digestive-biscuit colour, or slightly lighter. If it is grey or white the bike is running lean, allowing the combustion chamber temperature to rise to levels that will start to burn out valves or pit the piston crown. If it's black and oily, too much fuel is passing through. I recommend a run on a dyno to get a Power Commander set up for the best results.

Scott Bullett, Doble Motorcycles



Your Hornet will breathe freely, but a Power Commander will keep it sweet

Look after your bike's chain and it will look after you

SCOTT WOOD, EMAIL

Q What's the difference between chainwax and chainlube? Which is best for my bike and how often should I be using it? Every time I wash the bike or more often?



Both wax and spray-on fluid do the same job, which is to keep friction between the working surfaces to a minimum.

If you don't lubricate, the increased friction will soak up power and rapidly wear out your chain. O-ring chains use small rubber rings to seal grease into the working area of the pin and bushing, but they still need regular lubrication to keep the O-rings supple and also reduce friction and heat between the roller and bushing, as well as between the chain and sprockets.

The best time to lubricate your chain is after a good ride as the links will be relatively warm so the lubricant will penetrate further. The lube will do the best job on a clean chain, too. A low-tech cleaning approach is brushing on and wiping off paraffin thoroughly, maybe putting a pan underneath. Or you can use a proprietary spray-on chain cleaner

like Muc-Off. You spray it on and wipe away with a cloth and any stubborn grime, lube or road muck comes off, while the chain cleaner evaporates from the surface. Only use O-ring friendly solvents and avoid water, and if you have compressed air use it to dry the chain thoroughly and quickly.

The best way to lube the chain is with the rear wheel off the ground, slowly rotating the wheel (by hand, not with the engine) while applying the lube at the sideplate/roller junction so it spreads over to the sideplates and rollers. Don't soak it, as the excess will get flung onto your bike and it will attract dirt to act as a grinding paste.

Wax is a heavier more fling-resistant medium, perhaps more beneficial on 600cc-plus bikes, while oil can be applied if you have the patience - use 85w/140 gear oil and a small paint brush. So, if you are on a tight budget consider gear oil (after all, that's what most bike manufacturers suggest), use oil or wax if it's a mid-range bike, and use wax if you have a 750cc-plus bike.

Whichever way you go, you need to leave the lube to soak in for 30 minutes, before wiping off the excess, and then you are good to go.

Chris Dabbs, MCN



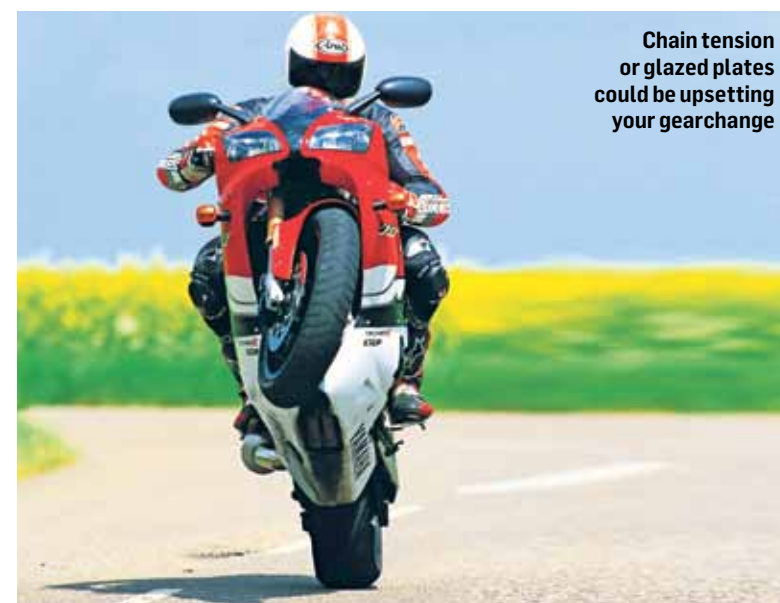
CHAIN CARE OPTIONS

Muc-off chain cleaner £8	Silkolene cleaner £8.50	Castrol MTX gear oil £12.99	Muc-off PTFE chain lube £10	Silkolene Pro Chain £11.17	SDoc100 Chain Spray £11.99	SDoc100 Cleaner £10	Silkolene Dri Gel £11.99	Wurth chain wax £8.99

My old R1 won't do clutchless changes

Q My 1998-99 Yamaha R1 isn't letting me make clutchless changes, even though it's got new fibre and steel clutchplates. What should I check? Simon Sanderson, email

A As it's an early R1 and it could have had a hard life, you could have selector fork wear. If the chain tension is on the tight side, when you blip the throttle, the rear wheel can load the gearbox before the next gear goes in properly. I know you have new clutch plates, but did you soak them in engine oil before fitting them? If not, you could have glazed them, causing the sort of problem you describe. **Stuart Gaines, A2 Motorcycle Centre**



Chain tension or glazed plates could be upsetting your gearchange

Why is my Triumph lighting up the sky?

Q The headlight on my three-year-old Triumph America has started pointing into the trees despite my best efforts to adjust it. What am I doing wrong? Bob Parker, email

A I have had three Americas fail MoTs on headlight aim in the last two months, so you are not alone. The bulb pops into a plastic housing with a wire clip to hold it in place. The wire then goes over a plastic lip. It is this lip that breaks, perhaps while riding on rough roads, which allows the bulb to wobble around. It's all one piece with the reflector unit and costs about £80 to replace. **Adrian Clancy, Total Triumph**

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

KNOCKED OFF IN HIT-AND-RUN. WHO WILL PAY?

Q Someone knocked me off my scooter and fled the scene. Luckily I only sustained a couple of broken ribs, but I was off work for a couple of weeks and my leathers were damaged. I've heard that the Motor Insurers' Bureau might help, but how does it work? **Shane Nash, Porthcawl**

'The MIB compensates hit-and-run victims and diesel spill victims and more'

A The Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) is a government body set up to help victims of untraced and uninsured drivers.

In your case the relevant agreement is the Victims of Untraced Drivers' Agreement 2003. The MIB will compensate for personal injuries and financial losses although in "untraced" cases, property damage and property-related damage are excluded. The exception to this is in cases of "significant injury". This is defined by the MIB as an injury requiring four or more continuous nights in hospital. This is not excluded in "uninsured" driver cases. The MIB levies a £300 excess where property damage is claimed.

The MIB compensates hit-and-run victims and diesel spill victims but this is not all. The MIB will also compensate in the some cases, assuming the evidence can be gathered to prove on the balance of probabilities (more than 50%) that the negligence of an untraced driver was responsible for the accident.

The cases they will compensate for are shed loads, vehicle parts in road causing a collision, dazzling by full beam headlights or other items in the road, such as parts of roadworks knocked into the road by other motorists. It's worth a try.



Andrew Campbell, Bikelawyer. Visit www.bikelawyer.co.uk or email andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk
Bikelawyer
Motorcycle Accident Solicitors

CHOOSE BEFORE YOU LOSE SEEKING A TWIN FOR FUN TIMES
MCN bikesforsale.com
I'm looking for a twin-cylinder sportsbike for occasional weekend kicks. **Patrick Sire, email**



The edgy option
KTM RC8 £4700-£10,495

The RC8 is simply stunning. Its engine is powerful and usable; handling shames Japanese and Italian superbikes; looks totally different to the norm but is, oh so appealing. 152bhp | 198kg | 16.5l | 805mm seat



The smooth option
DUCATI 748 £2499-£5500

Visually identical to the 916, but with a smaller engine (and narrower rear wheel). That means sublime handling on smooth surfaces and a feel-good experience few motorcycles can match. 103bhp | 196kg | 17l | 790mm seat



The Aprilia option
APRILIA RSV1000 FACTORY £3500-£6694

The Factory version of the RSV R comes with Öhlins rear suspension. It is tall, slender and works best with a rider who can boss it. Hard suspension's a pain on bumpy roads but divine on good surfaces. 143bhp | 180kg | 18l | 810mm seat