

ASK THE EXPERTS

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



TYRES
Bryn Phillips
Product manager at Cambrian Tyres, the UK's biggest supplier to the bike trade



GENERAL
Chris Dabbs
MCN's agony uncle, former road tester with 30 years' bike experience



YAMAHA
Stuart Gaines
Senior technician at used bike dealer Herne Bay Motorcycles in Kent



GENERAL
Cristian Ingnoli
Workshop manager at In Moto, specialising in Kawasaki and KTM

I have a persistent oil leak around the sprocket cover on my Yamaha YZF-R6 that is driving me mad. I've changed the oil seals for the gearbox sprocket, clutch pushrod and gearlever but the oil still keeps dribbling out. It runs down from behind the cover and must be high up because when I remove the cover, the bolt in the centre is covered in oil.

A If you've replaced all the seals it could be a crack or porosity in the crankcases I'm afraid.

The best time to zero in on the source of any oil leak is when the engine is running and up to temperature. That way the oil will be under pressure and if there are any cracks or porous areas the oil will work its way out.

But first you have got to get the suspect area spotlessly clean and dry. You're always going to be struggling with this part of the bike, as it's normally encrusted in old chain lube and road crud, so you need to give it a proper spring clean. First off, get the degreaser and a stiff brush and wash the grime away. Then you need to spray plenty of contact cleaner around the area to dry it out completely, before puffing a layer of talcum powder over the area. Pick a dry day to do this because you are going to have to take it for short ride around the block to get the oil under enough pressure. But before you set off, start it up and let the engine heat spread throughout the engine. A good indicator that you're ready to roll is when the cooling fan kicks in.

Stuart Gaines, Herne Bay Motorcycles



Yamaha's oil leak is driving me mad

JAMES BALLAM, EMAIL

Talcum powder, degreaser and a good hard ride will help you track down mystery leak

Blackbird fork fix won't be cheap

Q I have a 2007 Honda Blackbird with 24,500 miles on the clock which I use every day for work, and also days out. I've planned a trip to Europe in July, but the problem is the front suspension, which feels a bit skippy over small bumps in the road on corners. There isn't much adjustment on the front forks and I'm wondering what is the best way to sort this out without breaking the bank?

Tony Lovejoy, Berkshire

A Firstly, you should have your forks serviced with all new genuine bushes and seals, which would cost around £200. The bike had springs that were relatively soft for such a heavy bike, and damping that doesn't function well over small or big bumps.

Just changing the springs would cure one problem, but would highlight the poor damping. The stock rebound damping doesn't control the standard spring force very well, so fitting stiffer springs will make it worse. Having the forks revalved would allow the forks to soak up the bumps better, and would control the stiffer springs necessary to support the mass of the bike and rider properly. Expect to pay another £125 on top of the service cost.

Gareth Evans, Reactive Suspension



A full service, stiffer springs and a revalve will sort Blackbird's forks

I need cheap waterproof leggings for rainy days on the continent

SUPERBOL, MCN FORUM

I never ride in the wet, but I'm off to Assen in April and I want some cheap and cheerful rain protection for my legs. What do you recommend?



You don't mention what you'll be wearing underneath the trousers, but I'm going to assume leathers or Kevlar jeans, so you won't be looking for anything armoured or thermally-lined. Spada 911s at £16.99 are basic but perform well, as do Richa Rain Warriors. The Rev'it Acid H2O are RIDE magazine recommended and have a Teflon liner to make sliding them on very easy.

Other design details to look for are decent-length leg zips to open the leg out while you are hauling them on over your leathers. You should also check the cut for a decent-sized rear and a high enough waist so that you get a good overlap with the jacket.

These products are a staple of any bike shop, so drop into your local one and ask what they've got. It's a good idea to transport them in a plastic carrier bag as you can put your foot in the bag when putting them on and they'll slide right on instead of hooking up on your boot's zips, buckles and toe sliders. That could come in very handy when you're sheltering under a motorway bridge somewhere east of Utrecht. Have a good trip.

Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles



Spada 911 £19.99

TOP TROUSERS



Richa Rain Warriors £19.99



Held Aqua £26.99



Rev-It Acid H2O £32.99



Spidi SC485 £24.99

CHOOSE BEFORE YOU LOSE NAKED OR HALF-FAIRED 1000
MCN bikesforsale.com
What big bore naked or half-faired bike will suit my 100-mile commute?
Peter Cole, email



The classy option
YAMAHA FZ1 FAZER £3000-£9799

The Yamaha has the ability of a sports tourer and a city motorcycle, too. It's still one of the best premium, sporty all-round bikes you can buy.
150bhp | 199kg | 181 | 815mm seat



The steady option
SUZUKI BANDIT 1250 £3495-£4999

The Bandit has upright seating, a sumptuous seat and perfectly placed footpegs to go with a water-cooled, fuel-injected peach of an engine.
97bhp | 229kg | 191 | 805mm seat



The sporty option
TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE £3895-£6200

The 1050 triple motor has lots of stomp and a lovely broad power delivery. The suspension is on the firm side, but the handling is precise.
128bhp | 189kg | 181 | 815mm seat

Can I boost my brakes with rerouted lines?

Q When I replace the brake lines on my ZX-10R can I boost its braking performance changing from a single line splitting with a Y-piece into one line for each caliper, to either a line for each side or one pipe to one side with another going over to the other caliper?
John Adair, email

A In theory, the shorter your brake lines, as in one down and one over, the better the feel at the lever. But this would be a pig to bleed, so you'd probably get better brakes using straight runs of pipe because you'd have more chance of getting all the air out of them.
Cristian Ingnoli, InMoto



Changing lines will alter your bike's braking feel

I don't want to lose my licence to thrill

Q I've read about the DVLA losing people's motorcycle entitlement when updating old paper licences to plastic. How do I ensure it doesn't happen to me?
Paul Robison, email

A The DVLA say you should include an SAE and covering letter with your form, requesting the return of your old licence as proof of your entitlement. We've also heard of riders pretending they have lost their original licence when applying for a new one, so they then still have the original as proof of entitlement. If the new licence is complete the rider can then return the old one to the DVLA.
Chris Dabbs, MCN

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

CAN I CLAIM FROM MY SOLICITOR?

Q I am very annoyed at the service provided by my solicitors and I would like to make a claim against them. It was a straightforward situation of a car turning across my path, four years ago. Most of my injuries recovered within nine months, although there have been some serious implications to my right hand and wrist which has affected my job as a music teacher. My solicitors, provided as part of my insurance, forgot to issue my claim at court and have written to me to apologise. They say they are trying to sort it but surely this is a big problem? Either there is a time limit or not.

'Missing a limitation period is the single most common reason for claims against solicitors'

A You are right to be annoyed. In personal injury claims arising from road traffic accidents, proceedings have to be commenced by issuing the claim at court by the third anniversary of the accident, otherwise the claim becomes statute barred and you cannot pursue it without permission of the court. Failing to issue a claim within the prescribed time limit is negligence on the part of the solicitors.

It sounds like your solicitors are hoping they can persuade a judge to disregard the time limit, but they may well find that the judge, rather than assisting your lawyers, deems the claim struck out, and directs you to your solicitor's insurers to pursue a claim against them.

Missing a limitation period is the most common reason for claims against solicitors. Your claim will entitle you to recover what you should have recovered from your opponent's insurer. This time appoint a specialist so you don't find yourself potentially suing the second firm if they also get it wrong!



Andrew Campbell
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