

How do I reduce my weather helm?

This is reprinted from the Dart 16 Chat Forum.

Question

I have noticed that when out in a good breeze (Force 4-5) the tiller feels very heavy when beating on a port tack (I almost need both hands to hold it, and the boat continually wants to head up), whereas when beating on a starboard tack the tiller feels OK. What if anything could I do to the rudders to get around this. The boat is fairly new (1 year old) and I have not made any previous adjustments to the rudders.

Answer

2 things to investigate.

Firstly check the adjustment pads underneath the tiller arms, that locate against the white plastic top knob on the stock and the rudder blade when fully lowered. Are they a reasonably tight fit?

Check the amount of play in your blades by lifting the stern of the boat high enough so that you can fully lower the rudder blades when fitted onto the pintles. Can you move the blades back & forward! If yes, by a big amount, the pads have slipped and need re-adjusting.

Lift the tiller arm and loosen the 2 screws that locate the pad, gently tap the pad to reduce the gap between the rudder, re tighten the screws and then lower the blade and recheck the amount of play. You only need a tiny amount of play, so that you can easily lift them when getting into shallow water. Make sure that both screws are fully tightened to avoid a premature slip again. (If the screw heads are knackered, you'll need to visit a nut & bolt stockist and get some 6mm stainless steel socket head screws x 20mm long. Plus some washers).

If that adjustment doesn't do the trick, it maybe that 1 rudder is out of alignment. With both rudders fitted on the boat and the connecting bar fitted, check to see that both rudders are on the centreline pointing fore & aft and not lying at an angle, i.e. stalling the flow.

If this is the case it maybe that only 1 needs adjusting. This is done by either extending or shortening the length of the connecting bar. You will find that 1 end is either riveted or screwed to the flexible joint connection. Simply remove the rivet/screw, re align both rudders and re-fix the bar in the correct place.

These steps will cure the problem, if you need more assistance, let me know.

Regards,

Dago