

YOU BE THE JUDGE!

Learn More About The Classes And Some Things The Judge Is Looking For...

PLEASURE DRIVING- The Pleasure Driving class displays the rich history horses have as pulling animals. Think of this as a car show and the cart as a two seater roadster pulled by an engine of one horsepower! The judge first looks for the horse with the best manners and who performs its gaits correctly (for instance, they should not start to trot when they are asked to walk and should not start running when they are asked to trot!). The judge also considers the quality and conformation of the horse. Lastly, the judge takes into account the "turn out" of the driver and vehicle. Is the vehicle suited for the horse? Is the harness put on properly? Does it fit? You will often see ladies with beautiful driving hats and gentlemen in suits. Drivers often wear an "apron" to stay warm, clean and dry. The horse will be shown at the flat walk and trot and will be asked to extend the trot (or put the pedal to the metal ... a little) as if cruising down a country road! The horse must also stand quietly and back readily.

REINSMANSHIP- Here is the driver's chance to show off. The horse is again shown pulling a cart, but it is the driver's skill that is judged. How good is their communication to their horse?

HALTER ENGLISH/DRIVING TYPE- Here we are looking at how a horse is put together. This is a great opportunity for breeders to get feedback on their breeding program. These classes feature horses shown in their halter. You will see various breeds of horses that would be good for English riding or Driving. The handler must stand the horse so that the judge can see its conformation. Different breeds are taught to stand differently so as to show off to their best advantage. The judge will ask the handler to move the horse so that its motion can be demonstrated. Each horse is evaluated according to its own breed standard. While we don't have room to list all of the breed standards here, some basic questions are: Are the horse's legs straight? Are they twisted in or out? Are the feet even and balanced? Are the angles of the hip and shoulders good for that breed, but also for English riding or Driving (good for pulling a cart or pushing off from the hindquarters) Is the length of back good for that horse? Does the neck come out right (should be higher for most English/Driving breeds) Is the head fine or coarse? Is the eye big and friendly? These are just some of the questions to ask! The horse is judged 50% on its conformation and finish; 50% on its movement. Halter classes are divided by age and sex of the horse. There is also a class where the emphasis is placed on the horse's color. (See also "Halter Stock Type" on the reverse side)

LEADLINE WALK ONLY- Let's get the kids involved! This is a great place for youngsters to get their feet wet in the show ring. Parents, trainers or other handlers lead the horses with the kids atop. Any breed of horse or type of saddle is fine. Though they are just starting out, the kids should try to have good posture and hold their reins properly for the style of riding they are performing.

ENGLISH PLEASURE WALK AND TROT- What is "English" riding anyway? English riding is a broad term used to describe various styles of riding that have the common feature of a relatively small and light saddle that does not have a horn and permits free movement of the rider's leg. In English styles, the rider uses both hands to direct the horse as opposed to "neck reining" used in Western riding. Some English styles are: Hunter, Jumping, Saddle Seat and Dressage. The word "Pleasure" just means that the horse should appear pleasurable to ride. In English Pleasure Walk and Trot, the horse is being shown in ANY of the English styles. The horse will be asked to perform the walk and the trot, a two beat diagonal gait where the left fore and right hind move together and vice versa. Each horse is judged to its own style (for instance, a Dressage horse is expected to move differently than a Saddle Seat horse). For the horse to move properly, the rider should be well positioned in the saddle and moving in coordination and rhythm with the horse (at the trot, the rider's motion is called "posting"). The horse is judged on its manners, performance, suitability to style, quality and conformation. It must also stand quietly and back readily.

ENGLISH PLEASURE- Again, the horse is shown in ANY English style. Here, though, in addition to being asked to perform the walk and trot, the horse will also be asked to perform a third gait called the "canter." The canter is a three beat gait where one hind leg strikes the ground first, then the other hind leg and diagonal foreleg strike together. The other foreleg strikes the ground last. The horse is judged on its manners, performance, suitability to style, quality and conformation. It must also stand quietly and back readily.

HUNTER PLEASURE- Now we start getting specific! Hunter is a specific style of English riding. You may have seen a Hunter in one of the English Pleasure classes. There they compete against all other English styles. Here, all competitors will be riding in the Hunter style. Hunter Pleasure is based on the tradition of Fox hunting, where horses must be well-tempered, obedient and have the right sort of stride and conformation to be successful. Horses of any breed may compete. The hunt type English saddle places the rider slightly forward. The horse should not have too much knee action and should have good length of stride. Fluid movement is key. For the horse to move properly, the rider should be well positioned in the seat, very slightly forward with heels, hip and shoulder in alignment. The heels should be dropped and hands quiet. Posture should be good and eyes forward. The rider should move in coordination with the horse and elements such as diagonal and lead must be correct. While proper riding suits are not required at Equistar, the Hunter rider should wear classic breeches, a tall boot, a short jacket, a tailored shirt with a matching cloth choker, gloves and a helmet. The horse will be asked to walk, trot, extend the trot, canter and hand-gallop. The horse is judged on manners, performance, suitability, quality and conformation.

HUNTER HACK- Hunter Hack is similar to Hunter Pleasure, however the horse is additionally judged on its form over two fences. Ideally the horse should demonstrate an even arc over the fence. To do that, the rider must set the horse up properly and have good body position. The horse should be obedient, not balk, carry its head properly and perform its gaits correctly.

ENGLISH EQUITATION- Here it is the rider who is judged. A good equitation rider is always in balance with the horse, maintains a correct body position in every gait, movement, and possesses a commanding, but relaxed, presence, able to direct the horse with nearly invisible cues. The rider may perform any English style, but must maintain proper body position for that style.

SADDLE SEAT PLEASURE- Saddle Seat riding as a distinct English style was developed in the United States from a few sources. The first was in the American colonies, where smooth-moving, high-stepping horses were used to travel long distances over relatively flat terrain. Saddle Seat was further developed by plantation owners who traveled across their fields. These horses had to be smooth riding and comfortable enough to be ridden all day, yet showy enough to ride to town. Another influence was European: a flatter English show saddle was developed from the tradition of riders who would often show off their flashiest, highest-stepping horses by riding them in city parks on Sundays. Hence, the term "Park" or "Park action" is still used today to describe competitions where the action of the horse is of paramount importance (as in the next class we talk about). In the Saddle Seat Pleasure class, manners are of utmost importance. The saddle used is called a cutback or Lane Fox saddle and is very flat and light. Expect these horses to be more upright with high head carriage and shorter strides with greater knee action. They can appear somewhat longer and slimmer as they are the "Cadillac" of the horses. Typical Saddle Seat breeds are Saddlebreds, Morgans and Arabians (of course, the individual horse's conformation and personality will dictate whether it is suited for Saddle Seat). Note also that the rider sits quite differently than the Dressage or Hunter rider. The rider sits as if in a chair, with knees a bit more bent, calves away from the horse, chest upright, chin up and hands higher. Formal riding suits are not required at Equistar, but a proper saddle suit consists of a long jacket, long, flared trousers, vest, shirt, tie, short boots, gloves and a bowler derby. The horse is shown at the flat walk, trot and canter. It must stand quietly and back readily. The horse is judged on manners, performance, presence, quality and conformation.

PARK HORSE- As mentioned in the Saddle Seat Pleasure description, the "Park" horse is a flashy, high-stepping animal with great quality and presence. While the horse should be well-mannered, animation is of primary importance. The horse performs the animated or bouncy walk, Park trot, and canter. Exhibitors often wear a tuxedo type outfit!

DRESSAGE SUITABILITY- Dressage is another English style of riding. Its fundamental purpose is to develop, through standardized progressive training methods, a horse's natural athletic ability and willingness to perform, thereby maximizing its potential as a riding horse. At the peak of a dressage horse's gymnastic development, it can smoothly respond to a skilled rider's minimal aids by performing the requested movement while remaining relaxed and appearing effortless. The dressage training scale is arranged in a pyramid fashion, with "rhythm and regularity" at the bottom of the pyramid and "collection" at the top. In Dressage Suitability, the horse's potential as a Dressage mount is to be considered. The horse's muscles should be supple and loose; it should move freely forward in a clear and steady rhythm, with purity of the gaits, and accepting contact with the bit. The horse should show lightness of the forehand and engagement of the hindquarters. Resistance and tension of the horse to be penalized. While formal riding suits are not required at Equistar, the proper Dressage attire typically consists of white or light colored breeches, a short riding coat of conservative color, a tailored shirt, a stock tie, tall boots, gloves and a helmet. To be judged 70% on performance of gaits and transitions, with attention to impulsion and submission, and using the objectives above as reference; and 30% on the rider's position, seat, and effective use of aids.

DRESSAGE EQUITATION- Here the Dressage rider's position is being judged. All movements should be obtained without apparent effort of the rider. The rider should be well balanced with a steady leg stretched downward. The upper body should be free with the elbows and arms close to the body and steady hands with thumbs upward. The ear/shoulder/hip/heel should be in alignment with a vertically hanging stirrup leather. Heels should feather down. Trunk should be upright with chest open and aligned spine with rider looking up. There should be a straight line from the elbow to the horse's mouth.

HORSES IN TRAINING- This class is designed for horses that are still in training and are not quite ready to compete. They get out to the show- see the sights, hear the sounds ... but are not under any pressure as the class is not judged.

HALTER STOCK TYPE- Stock horses are working ranch horses and typically include Quarter Horses, Paint Horses, and Appaloosas, but also can include other breeds and cross-breeds where the individual horse exhibits the powerful build required to perform ranch work. The judge looks for well-mannered individuals in the order of their resemblance to the breed ideal and that are the most positive combination of balance, structural correctness, and movement with appropriate breed and sex characteristics and adequate muscling. Some breeds (and, particularly, cross-breeds like Arabian/Quarter horse crosses) could go into English/Driving Type *or* Stock Type. It depends upon the individual horse's conformation and muscling.

SHOWMANSHIP- The showmanship class is judged strictly on the exhibitor's ability to fit and show a horse at halter. The horse is merely a prop to demonstrate the ability and preparation of the exhibitor. The ideal showmanship performance consists of a poised, confident, neatly attired exhibitor leading a well groomed and conditioned horse that quickly and efficiently performs the requested pattern with promptness, smoothness and precision.

GAITED BREEDS- Some horses have the ability to perform gaits that are different than the usual walk/trot or jog/canter or lope. The other gaits are sometimes known as "ambling" gaits and are very comfortable to ride. Some breeds that perform these gaits are the Tennessee Walking Horse (performs the Flat Walk and Running Walk), Fox Trotter (performs the Flat Walk and Fox Trot), American Saddlebreds (performs the Slow Gait and the Rack), Paso Finos and Peruvian Pasos (both have a range of ambling gaits). Many of these breeds also perform the usual gaits. These horses are judged on manners, performance, quality and conformation with special emphasis on the quality or trueness of their ambling gaits.

DONKEYS AND MULES ENGLISH OR WESTERN PLEASURE- We can't forget our long-eared friends! Donkeys and mules are strong and reliable mounts. While donkeys and mules can enter any of our other classes, we set these aside just for them. They are judged just like horses- on their manners, performance, quality and conformation.

WESTERN PLEASURE WALK AND JOG- Western riding is a style which evolved from the ranching and warfare traditions brought to the Americas by the Spanish Conquistadors, and both equipment and riding style evolved to meet the working needs of the cowboy in the American West. American cowboys needed to work long hours in the saddle over rough terrain, sometimes needing to rope cattle with a lariat. Because of the necessity to control the horse with one hand and use a lariat with the other, western horses were trained to neck rein that is, to change direction with light pressure of a rein against the horse's neck. Horses were also trained to exercise a certain degree of independence in using their natural instincts to follow the movements of a cow, thus a riding style developed that emphasized a deep, secure seat, and training methods encouraged a horse to be responsive on very light rein contact. A good pleasure horse has a free-flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with his conformation. He should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort. Ideally, he should have a balanced, flowing motion, while exhibiting correct gaits that are of the proper cadence. The quality of the movement and the consistency of the gaits is a major consideration. He should carry his head and neck in a relaxed, natural position, with his poll level with or slightly above the level of the withers. His head should be level with his nose slightly in front of the vertical, having a bright expression with his ears alert. He should be shown on a reasonably loose rein, but with light contact and control. He should be responsive, yet smooth, in transitions when called for. When asked to extend, he should move out with the same flowing motion. In this class, the horse will be judged at the walk and jog.

WESTERN PLEASURE- This class is judged on the same criteria as Western Pleasure Walk and Jog, however the horses will also be asked to lope.

STOCK SEAT (WESTERN) EQUITATION- Here, as in English Equitation, the rider is judged, not the horse. The exhibitor should appear natural in the seat and ride with a balanced, functional and correct position. Exhibitors should sit and maintain an upright position with the upper body at all gaits. The rider should sit in the center of the saddle and the horse's back with the legs hanging to form a straight line from the ear, through the center of the shoulder and hip, touching the back of the heel or through the ankle. The heels should be lower than the toes, with a slight bend in the knee and the lower leg should be directly under the knee. The rider's back should be flat, relaxed and supple. Light contact should be maintained with the saddle and horse from the knee to mid-calf. The knee should point forward and remain closed with no space between the exhibitor's knee and the saddle. The exhibitor will be penalized for positioning the legs excessively behind or forward of the vertical position. Regardless of the type of stirrup, the feet may be placed home in the stirrup, with the boot heel touching the stirrup, or may be placed with the ball of the foot in the center of the stirrup. Both hands and arms should be held in a relaxed, easy manner, with the upper arm in a straight line with the body. The arm holding the reins should be bent at the elbow forming a line from the elbow to the horse's mouth. The free hand and arm may be carried bent at the elbow in a similar position as the hand holding the reins or straight down at the rider's side. The rider's chin should be level and eyes forward.

TRAIL COURSE- Here we re-create some of the obstacles you might be confronted with on the trail. The riders are given a pattern to follow and they are judged on their performance of each element. The In-Hand Trail Course is a great class for young horses or young exhibitors to get their feet wet in trail. The handler just leads the horse through the course (it can be tougher than it sounds!).



So, how did your selections compare with the judge's?