

# HUNTER PLEASURE



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## SUMMARY

Manners is the first specification for Open, Amateur, Ladies and Gentlemen classes - it is imperative that you place primary emphasis on this class specification. Ideal manners for a Hunter Pleasure Horse:

- Calm, responsive, and obedient

Performance is the second specification for all Hunter Pleasure classes. Ideal performance of a Hunter Pleasure horse:

- Perform all gaits correctly (see AR141)
- Judges are required to consider the performance of each gait equally in adjudicating.
- Gaits should result from a balanced, cadenced motion that emanates from moderate impulsion created from the hindquarters.
- Naturally long stride that is free moving and reaching; pushing from the hindquarters with long, low steps, reaching forward with ease.
- Elliptical motion and little bending and lifting of the knees.
- Slightly rounded, longer more rectangular frame with engagement and light rein contact.

Suitability as a Hunter is the third specification for all Hunter Pleasure classes.

- The horse is in a frame suitable to take a jump safely and efficiently
- Bold, powerful horse, balanced front end to year end.

Quality is the first criteria for a Hunter Pleasure Junior Horse.

- The strength and athleticism required to perform the tasks of a Hunter Pleasure horse with ease and finesse.
- Quality is the degree of excellence exuded by muscle tone, depth of muscle, clean, fine bone, balance front to rear, good carriage and a dignified presence.

# HUNTER PLEASURE

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### DESCRIPTION and QUALIFYING GAITS

- It is imperative that the horse give the distinct impression of being a pleasure to ride and display a pleasurable and relaxed attitude.
- Compared to an English Pleasure, Country English Pleasure or English Show Hack horse which is shown in an upright frame, the Hunter Pleasure horse should be in a longer, more rectangular frame, with the neck carried lower and in a more relaxed manner with less arch in the neck and less bend at the poll.
- The stride at every gait should be long, cover ground, and exhibit efficiency of movement.
- While some degree of carriage is appropriate in an Arabian Hunter Pleasure class, a stride that is short, high, and round is not appropriate.
- Horses that are, for more than a few strides, high headed, ridden on a draped rein, not in the appropriate frame, on the forehand, short-strided, or behind the vertical must be severely penalized.

### GAITS

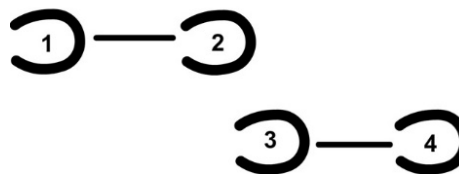
- The quality of gaits or horse's movement is not listed as a separate specification in a performance class. However, gaits and

movement are of utmost importance in every class criteria.

- The horse's movement is critical in judging. It is the backbone of a performance class.
- It is imperative the judge consider the way of going or quality of gaits of every horse in every class, recognize and consider the way of going, or correct movement for each different type of performance class.
- Judges are required to consider the performance at each gait equally when adjudicating the class.

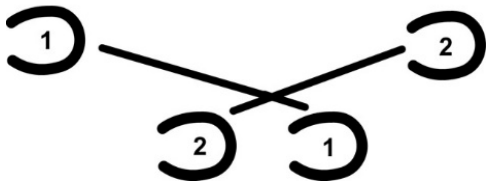
**Walk - A four-beat gait, straight, true and flat-footed. Regular and unconstrained with good reach.**

- At the walk, the hunter must propel itself forward from behind with long-reaching strides.
- The horse's head and neck are relaxed as the horse moves its legs one after the other so that four hoof beats may be heard.
- The horse moves from one foot to the other with no period of suspension. The walk should be regular, show good reach and be ground covering.
- The sequence of foot falls are (1) left hind, (2) left fore, (3) right hind, (4) right fore.



**Trot - A two beat gait: Straight and regular. The trot should be mannerly, cadenced, and balanced. To be performed at a medium speed with a free moving, long, ground covering, efficient stride that is not short, high, round, or choppy. Rider to post the trot.**

- The trot is a two-beat diagonal gait in which opposite fore and hind feet hit the ground together.
- The hunter's trot must be free flowing, balanced and cadenced with rhythm and drive.
- The hunter's trot should give the appearance of strength and ease of gait, a picture of elegance as the horse swings its front legs forward, through the shoulder, with each step and stretches for the ground.
- The hocks should bend and the hind legs should reach well under the belly, the steps reaching over the foot print of the front foot, showing power and suspension, giving the appearing of gliding over the ground.
- Speed is not a factor; the trot should never be hurried.
- The sequence of footfalls are (1) left hind and right fore, (2) right hind and left fore.



- Exaggerated action, (this doesn't just mean English type action, but up and down rolling motion from the knees rather than a swing through the shoulder for reach), quick, stiff or short-strided movement must be penalized.
- Horses trotting too fast to maintain balance and cadence should also be penalized.

**Canter - A three-beat gait; even, smooth, unhurried, correct and straight on both leads.**

- The canter must show impulsion, balance and engagement.
- The horse's back must be relaxed and supple, allowing the hindquarters to

reach under and work with moderate power and drive.

- The horse's neck should be relaxed and carried in a natural position for each individual's conformation.
- The canter should be uninhibited, showing long, reaching steps, not short, high or overly collected steps.
- The canter should be an easy, comfortable gait for both horse and rider.
- The sequence of footfalls for a canter on



the right lead are (1) left hind, (2) right hind and left fore, (3) right fore.

**Hand-Gallop - The hand-gallop is performed with a long, free, ground-covering stride. The amount of ground covered may vary between horses due to the difference in natural length of stride. A decided lengthening of stride should be shown while the horse remains controlled, mannerly, correct and straight on both leads.**

- The hand-gallop is a gallop in hand - an easy controlled gallop showing a definite lengthening of stride while remaining obedient, mannerly and SAFE.
- The horse's frame, its back and neck should lengthen as it stretches out and reaches with longer, powerful strides from the hindquarters.
- The hand-gallop should give the appearance of being an easy, natural gait for the hunter, keeping rhythm and balance, while showing good reach and impulsion.
- The hand-gallop must never look hurried or out of control. The hand-gallop is the gait which, in a hunter, performs a course over fences. It must cover

ground, but it must be safe, balanced and controlled.

### APPOINTMENTS

- Bridle shall be light, show type; either snaffle, pelham, full bridle or kimberwicke bit acceptable. Browband/cavessons must be of hunter type.
- Junior Horse classes require a snaffle bit. (Snaffle bit is defined as snaffle bit of at least 3/8" diameter as measured 1/2" from the ring. The snaffle bit may be jointed, double jointed or unjointed. For all junior horse performance classes, all snaffle bits must have a round, egg butt or "D" shaped ring with no attachments to the headstall or reins through a hook (except for keepers for a full cheek snaffle when section rules allow a full cheek). Full cheek (with or without keepers), French and Dr. Bristol snaffle bits are permitted).
- The following are not permitted: ornamented bridles, browbands or cavessons, saddle seat style colored browbands/cavessons, figure eight, drop, or flash nosebands.
- Breastplate or breast collar is optional.
- No martingales or tie-downs.
- Type of English saddle is optional, but forward seat type saddle recommended. Saddle Seat type saddles are not allowed

### ATTIRE

Informal attire is required. It includes a coat of conservative color (black, blue, gray, green, or brown, **or burgundy**, and conservative shades thereof) made of materials that are suitable that are suitable for **and follow the tradition of fox hunting. It is further recommended that the rider's attire not distract from the performance of the horse and rider.**

- Discrete patterns such as tweeds, hounds tooth, jacquard, pinstripes, or subtle plaids are allowed.
- Coats must be darker than the breeches or jodhpurs. Brocades, raised patterns, or glossy/metallic/shiny fabrics or materials are not suitable for hunting.

- Ornamentation other than a stock or lapel pin, tie clip or tack, or monogram are not allowed on any item of attire.
- Gloves are optional, but, if worn, must be of conservative color.
- Boots and a conservatively colored hunting cap, derby or protective headgear are mandatory.
- Non-conforming exhibitors must be severely penalized.
- Spurs and crop or bat, no longer than 30" including lash (Exception: Side saddle), are optional, at the exhibitor's discretion.
- Note: Bright colors, frills and flare are not proper. Formal attire is not permitted.
- ***Judges must not eliminate a rider for inappropriate attire except for safety.***

### SPECIFICATION DEFINITIONS

#### SUITABILITY

- The Hunter Pleasure horse must be a horse that is suitable to be used as a hunter.
- The Hunter Pleasure horse must have the physical ability to be a hunter.
- Therefore, it must have a naturally long stride, free moving and reaching, the frame or carriage must be natural and relaxed, with engagement and light contact.
- Suitability as a Hunter as found in AR142 means that the horse is in a frame suitable to take a jump safely and efficiently.
- Hunter Pleasure horses should have a well laid back providing freedom of movement through the shoulder, not the knee, and good length of stride, a reasonably short back for strength and a powerful hip.
- The neck should be well set and of adequate length to be carried easily and used for balance.

- The stride from the rear end should be powerful and reach well under the belly with each step.
- The steps should never look quick or hurried; they should look long and powerful with suspension as the horse covers the ground easily.
- The hunter should be a bold, powerful horse, balanced front end to rear end, yet always calm and obedient.

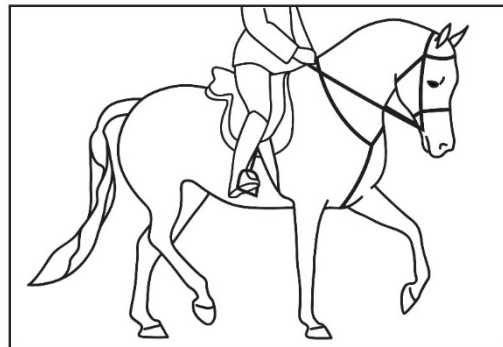
### MOVEMENT

- The ideal movement of the hunter is long, free-flowing strides with minimal upward and maximum forward motion.
- The hunter moves with long, low steps, reaching forward with such ease, smoothness and suspension they seem to be gliding across the ground. The hunter should push from the hindquarters and reach for the ground covered with each step, rather than just lift its feet up and down.
- The legs should move forward gracefully and freely so the strides appear to be effortless and long with minimal bending and lifting of the knees.
- The knees must not show exaggerated flexion or lift, the strides must not to short or quick, the motion of the steps should not resemble a sewing machine, up and down.
- High stepping horses, (not just English type action, but an up and down motion or rolling motion), are not desirable Hunter Pleasure mounts.
- The hocks should bend and drive as the hind legs move forward in long, powerful strides.
- The hind feet should step well under the belly, showing good reach, ideally reaching well over the foot print of the front foot.
- The movement of the hind legs actually comes from a soft, supple back, allowing the horse to reach with long steps rather than quick steps.

- The hunter must never give the impression of being stiff; it must be relaxed through the neck, back and hocks allowing for long, free-flowing, fluid gaits.
- If the horse is over flexed, the horse's movement will be compromised; it cannot be correct.

### FRAME

- The neck should be carried lower, and the head should be carried in a more relaxed manner with less bend at the poll, and the horse should be in a generally longer frame than that of the English Pleasure, Country English Pleasure or Show Hack horse.
- High headed horses and horses behind the vertical must be penalized.
- A hunter's "frame" or general carriage should not suggest extremes.
- The ideal frame for each horse depends on its own particular conformation; however, the frame should be natural and relaxed.
- The hunter's top line should be level; however, this reference to level is to the relationship between the height of the croup and the withers, not the poll and the croup.
- A horse with its croup higher than its withers cannot get its own weight off of its forehead and balance itself.
- It is a matter of individual conformation as to where each horse should actually carry its neck and poll in relation to its withers.



- The shape of the horse's entire body is a result of where it is allowed to carry its poll. If the horse's poll is lower than its withers, is a good indication that the hindquarters are not underneath for balance and impulsion.
- Depending on the horse's conformation, the poll will usually be about 4 to 8 inches above the withers when moving with proper impulsion from behind. The neck must be relaxed and carried easily.
- Ideally, the hunter will present a balanced curve from poll to croup and must give the impression of equality of movement between front end and rear end, balanced and cadenced with long, free flowing strides. Horses presented as such should be credited.
- Granted, it is very easy for Arabians to over bend at the poll and, therefore, carry themselves behind the vertical, not reaching through the back to the bridle. Just because it is easy, this is not correct, even though it is widely accepted.
- Horses that are behind the vertical and too low are not in balance. The gaits are compromised, usually quick; even if they are able to travel as fast, the horses are not able to actually reach for ground with long strides. The strides will be quick and short with the overall frame giving a downhill impression.
- It is up to you as the judge to credit the correct frame of the hunter and to penalize the horses that are being shown behind the vertical, often also behind the bridle.
- It is important that the hunter pleasure horse looks like a hunter, carries itself as a hunter and moves like a hunter.
- This is not a class for Western Pleasure horses moving faster in different attire or English type horses held lower.
- Correct hunter frame and correct hunter movement must be credited.

- As in all other performance classes, correct movement and frame or carriage is the basic criteria of the class.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

- The connection from the horse's hindquarters through the back and neck to the bit and the rider's hand with light contact on the bit is engagement.
- This engagement gives the horse's forward movement a sense of energy.
- The hindquarters should be nicely engaged, the hind legs working under the horse's body with moderate power, not strung out or trailing behind.
- This engagement is the appropriate amount of energy created by the hip, stifle and hock.
- How deeply a horse reaches its hind legs under the body depends on its conformation, training, confidence and relaxation.
- Suitable conformation gives the horse the ability and strength to properly and easily engage the hindquarters and back to carry itself.
- Through proper training and development, the horse learns engagement which enables it to connect through the back and use itself properly.
- The horse that understands the training and has the proper muscular development, is confident.
- Relaxation of the horse's body and mind comes from confidence and understanding the training which allows it to engage and perform properly.
- A horse that is tense is unable to relax its back, become supple and engage the hindquarters, resulting in shorter, faster steps, a lack of fluidity, suspension, ease of movement and overall stiff appearance.

## CONTACT

- **Direct but** light contact with the horse's mouth must be maintained at all gaits. Draped reins are incorrect. Direct contact means that there should be a straight line from the rider's hands to the horse's mouth.
- The horse must allow the rider to take a light contact on the reins without dropping behind the vertical or behind the bit.
- The horse must show energy from the hindquarters and must allow the rider to shape the energy with the leg, seat and hands through signals to the bit and light contact.
- Light contact is the line of communication from the rider's hand to the horse's mouth.
- The horse should move in a balanced frame between light contact in the rider's hand and the rider's seat and leg.
- A hunter must allow the rider to guide it through a course of fences where light contact is required.
- Some horses drop behind the vertical to escape the rider's hands, some horses are shown with too much contact to make them round, while others are shown on loose reins, free moving, but not connected or engaged because of lack of contact.
- Light contact is the goal, not strong, heavy contact and not loose reins. The ideal is a slightly rounded frame with a light contact that looks natural and easy.

## QUALITY

- The strength and athleticism required to perform the tasks of a Hunter Pleasure horse with ease and finesse.
- Quality is the degree of excellence exuded by muscle tone, depth of muscle, clean, fine bone, balance front to rear, good carriage and a dignified presence.

## MANNERS AND ATTITUDE

- It is imperative that the horse give the distinct appearance of being a pleasure to ride and display a pleasurable and relaxed attitude.
- Manners - the conduct or behavior with which the horse performs.
- Good manners reflect obedience and responsiveness to the rider, the willingness to be guided and controlled.
- Acceptance of surroundings and other horses in the arena.
- Manners are reflected in the way the horse performs.
- Hunters must be obedient and responsive to the rider, must be willingly guided and controlled with light contact, show good behavior and disposition.
- Good manners should reflect the horse's obedience to the rider with safety being all-important.
- The good Hunter Pleasure horse must display good manners by responding to the rider with willingness and ease while showing acceptance and a good disposition toward the surroundings and other horses in the arena.
- A relaxed attitude shows willingness. While the hunter is performing to the criteria of the class, it should do so in a pleasant and willing manner.
- It should be prompt without anticipating, relaxed without being dull and must be attentive to the rider.
- Attitude is the horse's mental approach to the job at hand and expression shown through behavior and conduct.
- Good attitude is reflected in a soft eye, alert ears, relaxed back, a willingness to perform, a quiet mouth and generally pleasant look.

## PERFORMANCE

- The physical act of doing all of the gaits, transitions from one gait to another, the execution or accomplishment of



carrying out all the requirements of the class.

#### **SUITABILITY AS A HUNTER**

- Means that the horse is in a frame suitable to take a jump safely and efficiently.

#### **QUALITY**

- The strength and athleticism required to perform the tasks of the Hunter Pleasure horse effortlessly and with finesse.
- The degree of excellence, condition, presence, carriage, balance and strength. A horse that is pleasing to the eye.

#### **CONFORMATION**

- The horse's correct structural form as it relates to the functions and performance of a Hunter Pleasure horse.

#### **CLASS SPECIFICATIONS**

- **Hunter pleasure classes will be judged by the above specifications in the order listed in each class specification:**
- In all Hunter Pleasure classes, except Junior Horse classes, manners are considered first in the judging criteria.
- However, in Junior Horse classes, quality is considered first in the judging criteria, allowing junior horses to be rewarded for potential, quality and performance rather than be penalized for lack of experience and finish.
- **NOTE: all Hunter Pleasure horses are required to hand-gallop. The hand-gallop is mandatory for a hunter, therefore, it is required in all Hunter Pleasure classes. Speed is not the important factor in the hand-gallop; it is a lengthening of stride.**
- All class specifications require suitability as a Hunter.
- All horses in this class should be suited to being a hunter

- Horses may show with a braided mane and/or tail, but it is not required.
- Backing is required and must be judged.

**OPEN:** To be shown at a walk, trot, canter and hand gallop both directions of the ring. To stand quietly and back readily. To be judged on manners, performance, suitability as a Hunter, quality and conformation.

**JUNIOR HORSE** (five years old and under). To be shown at a walk, trot, canter and hand gallop both directions of the ring. To stand quietly and back readily. To be judged on quality, performance, suitability as a Hunter, manners and conformation.

**AMATEUR.** To be shown at a walk, trot, canter and hand gallop both directions of the ring. To stand quietly and back readily. To be judged on manners, performance, suitability as a Hunter, quality and conformation.

**LADIES, GENTLEMEN:** To be shown at a walk, trot, canter and hand gallop both directions of the ring. To stand quietly and back readily. To be judged on manners, performance, suitability as a Hunter, quality and conformation.

#### **CREDITS OF THE HUNTER PLEASURE HORSE**

##### **PROPER HUNTER MOVEMENT AND FRAME**

- Strides, which are long, low and free flowing, showing maximum reach through the shoulder with minimal upward motion from the knee.
- The hindquarters showing powerful, long steps, reaching well under the horse.
- Credit the hunter that gives the appearance of gliding across the ground with suspension and ease, balanced and cadenced with self-carriage.
- The frame is natural and easy, with the horse maintaining light contact to the bridle.

- Credit the horse that gives you the impression that it has the movement and physical ability to jump over a course of fences.

#### **GOOD MANNERS AND GOOD ATTITUDE**

- The horse that is obedient and responsive to the rider, willingly guided and controlled, shows good behavior and a pleasant manner.

#### **GOOD PERFORMANCE**

- Performing the class requirements correctly and easily with finesse.

#### **SUITABILITY AS A HUNTER**

- The horse that shows the strength, physical ability and character to be a hunter, showing proper hunter carriage or frame, on light contact, correct hunter movement, engagement, confidence with a calm, relaxed attitude.

#### **MAINTAINING LIGHT CONTACT**

- The horse's willingness to maintain light contact, accept the rider's hand and leg, to be controlled easily and guided willfully, should be rewarded.

#### **QUALITY AND CORRECT CONFORMATION**

- Allow the horse to perform with ease, strength and finesse.

#### **FAULTS OF THE HUNTER PLEASURE HORSE**

##### **BAD MANNERS**

- Including wringing tail, pinned ears, cutting to the center of the arena, balking, bolting, kicking, bucking, gapping on the bit, not responding to the rider.

##### **BAD ATTITUDE**

- Including sour ears, swishing tail, avoiding contact with the bit, not performing with ease, smoothness and confidence, stressed or agitated, resistance.

#### **POOR PERFORMANCE**

- Including wrong leads, breaking gait, resistance, rough or abrupt transitions, heavy on the rider's hands, lack of response to the rider's aids.

#### **POOR MOVEMENT**

- Quick, short or choppy strides, too high knee action, clunky, too fast or too slow. Lacking reach and engagement, trotting too fast, out of balance or cadence.
- Horses that do not move correctly, as a hunter, must be penalized.

#### **UNTRUE GAITS**

- Uneven steps out of cadence or rhythm out of balance, not walking.

#### **UNNATURAL HEAD CARRIAGE**

- Too low, too high, behind the vertical, neck too arched. Hunters should be able to see where they are going.

#### **FRAME TOO EXTREME**

- The horse is too collected, strung out, or in an unnatural position for its own conformation. Horses going behind the vertical must be penalized.

#### **FAILURE TO MAINTAIN LIGHT CONTACT**

- The horse that drops behind the vertical or bit to evade the rider or bit, loose reins, the horse that is intimidated in the bridle, not accepting the bit or the horse that is pulling or heavy on the bit or above the bit.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

- **Judging is not an absolute. It is a matter of observation and evaluation, based on certain established criteria and rules.**
- However, in judging performance classes, everything is relative.
- All faults should be considered according to their severity and the depth of competition.

- Each fault is a void in one or more of the class specifications.
- However, a minor fault may not be elimination.
- Good judging depends upon a correct observance of the fine points and the selection of the best horses for the purpose of the class. T
- he best horses performing the most correctly, as established by the class criteria and specifications should be the winners.

SEE CHART ON FOLLOWING PAGE

## HUNTER PLEASURE CHART

GAIT	GOOD	MINOR FAULT	MAJOR FAULT	ELIMINATION GENERAL ITEMS
WALK	GROUND COVERING 4-BEAT, STRAIGHT, FLAT FOOTED RELAXED WALK	SLOW FAST LACK OF ATTENTION	SHORT STRIDED NERVOUS UNEVEN STEPS	BLOOD IN THE MOUTH, CHIN, SHOULDER OR FLANKS (AR105.6)
TROT	LONG, GROUND COVERING STRIDES EFFICIENT STEADY STRAIGHT	SHORT STRIDED CHOPPY ON FOREHAND	NOT CADENCED UNEVEN STRIDES HIGH KNEE EXCESSIVE MOTION EXCESSIVE SPEED	LAME (AR105.1 – must be serviceably sound)  WHIP MARKS (AR105.6)
CANTER	EVEN SMOOTH UNHURRIED, STRAIGHT, GROUND COVERING STRIDES	UNEVEN STRIDES TOO FAST ON FOREHAND	UNTRUE GAIT EXTREME SPEED NO CHANGE OF FRAME HIGH KNEE SWAPPING LEADS, CROSS CANTERING	ABUSIVE TREATMENT (AR105.4)  FALL OF HORSE OR RIDER, IF DUE TO BAD MANNERS OF HORSE (AR109.1-2)
HAND GALLOP	TRUE LENGTHENING OF STRIDE AND FRAME	QUICKER RATHER THAN LONGER ON FOREHAND	OUT OF CONTROL NO CHANGE OF FRAME	DANGEROUS TO OTHER EXHIBITORS (AR105.5)
BACK	PROPER FLEXION BACKS READILY, RESPONSIVE BACKS IN A STRAIGHT LINE	HESITATES NOT STRAIGHT SLIGHT RESISTANCE	RESISTANT REFUSAL HEAD THROWING GAPPING PULLING	REARING, RUNNING BACKWARDS, BUCKING, OUT OF CONTROL (AR105.5 - these would be examples of dangerous to others and possibly to rider
GENERAL	DIRECT, LIGHT CONTACT AT ALL GAITS GROUND COVERING STRIDES AT ALL GAITS PLEASURABLE, RELAXED ATTITUDE EFFICIENCY OF MOVEMENT	LOSS OF CONTACT LOSS OF FRAME LOSS OF CADENCE POOR TRANSITIONS	OVER BRIDLED BUSY MOUTH HIGH HEADED DRAPED REIN ON THE FOREHAND BAD ATTITUDE	
			UNNATURAL TAIL CARRIAGE (AR105.2)  It is the directive of the EEC that horses with unnatural tail carriage be placed either last on the card or eliminated from judging consideration and not placed in the class.	