

COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE



Prepared By The
Education/Evaluation Commission
and
Judges & Stewards Commissioner
10805 E. Bethany Drive
Aurora, Colorado 80014-2605
(303) 696-4539

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COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE

DESCRIPTION:

Good Country English Pleasure horses have a free-flowing stride that allows them to comfortably and calmly move forward with grace and style. Ideally, their gaits should result from a balanced, cadenced motion that emanates from moderate impulsion created from the hindquarters. Their natural conformation allows them to carry the head and neck in a relaxed, upright position, and serve as a balance arm. They are bright and alert while remaining attentive and responsive to the rider.

The attitude of the ideal Country English Pleasure horse is pleasant, confident, responsive and obedient. These horses perform all the gaits correctly in an unassuming, unforced fashion while under light contact. They are totally balanced individuals with exemplary manners. These horses have a genuine desire to please their riders, a quiet nature to do their tasks willingly, and the physical ability to do them easily. They have the discipline of a well trained horse and the finesse of an athlete while giving the appearance they enjoy their job, which makes them pleasing to watch. Ultimately, these horses instill a great deal of confidence in those who ride or watch them and give the impression of being a true pleasure to ride.

Light contact must be maintained with all reins at all gaits.

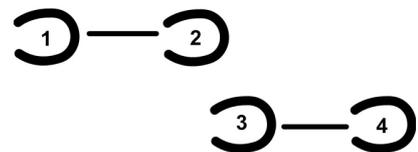
The Country English Pleasure horse's carriage and way of going is based on key elements that combine to make the ideal pleasure horse. To determine what is ideal, it helps to understand the requirements and criteria of the Country English Pleasure horse.

GAITS

It is imperative that the horse give the distinct appearance of being a pleasure to ride. A quiet, responsive mouth is paramount. All gaits must be performed with willingness and obvious ease, cadence, balance and smoothness. Judges are required to consider the performance of each gait equally in adjudicating this class. In Park, English Pleasure, Country English Pleasure, Combination and Saddle Seat Equitation classes, the transition from the trot to canter is not permitted.

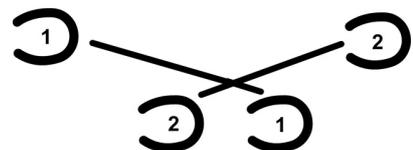
Walk - a four-beat gait. To be true, flat-footed, and ground covering.

At the walk, the horse must propel itself forward from behind with long reaching steps. The horse's head and neck are relaxed as the horse moves from one foot to the other with no period of suspension. The walk should be even and relaxed. The sequence of foot falls are (1) left hind, (2) left fore, (3) right hind, (4) right fore.



Normal trot - a two-beat gait. To be an overall balanced, relaxed, easy-going trot with elasticity and freedom of movement. High action MUST be penalized. Posting is required.

The trot is a two-beat diagonal gait in which opposite fore and hind feet hit the ground together. The trot must be balanced, cadenced, free-moving and easy, with rhythm and drive. The trot should show power and elegant



carriage with strength from the hindquarters while moving in an easy, ground covering, natural manner. The trot should never look forced, labored or artificial. The sequence of footfalls are (1) left hind and right fore, (2) right hind and left fore.

Strong trot - a two-beat gait. To be faster with lengthened stride, maintaining balance, ease and freedom of movement. High action MUST be penalized. Posting is required.

While maintaining the same cadence, balance and ease of movement, the strong trot is faster, showing a lengthening of stride. The horse should not pull down on the rider's hands or lose balance or rhythm. The brilliance of the strong trot depends on an energetic thrust from the hindquarters and a distinct forward swinging movement of the shoulders. This is not a flinging of the feet, but a true swing from the shoulder with good reach. The ground covered will vary between horses due to differences in natural length of stride and conformation. Speed and high knee action are not determining factors; however, the quality of the strong trot, balance front to rear end and cadence are factors. The strong trot must never look forced, labored or artificial.

Although an elevated knee should always result from the power and drive of this engagement of the hind limbs; it is not exclusive to "high action." High action is the result of frame (conformation and extent of collection), degree of impulsion (energy) and zealous spirit (attitude).

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

The canter must show impulsion balance and engagement. The horse's back must be supple and relaxed allowing the hindquarters to reach under and work with moderate power and drive. The horse's neck should be upright, appropriate for the horse's conformation. The canter should be uninhibited, showing long, reaching steps, not short, chopping, high or overly collected steps. The canter should be moved into easily and be smooth and comfortable for both the horse and rider. The canter should never be stiff or lack rhythm and energy. The sequence of footfalls for a canter on the right lead are (1) left hind, (2) right hind and left fore, (3) right fore.



NOTE: High Action at the canter or trot must be penalized. High action is defined as an intensified and ambitious manner of moving forward with collection in an upright frame with balance created by a round, supple back with substantial engagement of the hind limbs. There is a raising of the front end of the horse's torso as a result of the hind limb thrust which propels the horse upward and forward energetically with determination and deliberate power.

Hand-gallop - to be a faster gait, lengthened stride and controlled, straight and correct on both leads. Extreme speed MUST be penalized.

The hand-gallop should show a longer stride due to greater impulsion or thrust from the hindquarters, propelling the horse forward. The horse should show a willingness to go forward while remaining light, calm and maintaining cadence and balance.

APPOINTMENTS

Bridle shall be light, show type; either single curb, single snaffle, curb and bridoon or pelham bit. Junior Horse classes require a light, show type bridle; either single curb or single snaffle (defined as a smooth, rounded snaffle bit that is at least 3/8" in diameter as measured 1/2" from the ring, half cheeks permitted). The snaffle bit may be wrapped with Guardtex, Latex, Sealtex or similar materials), curb and bridoon or pelham bit. No martingales or tie-downs. English-type saddle. No forward seat saddles allowed.

ATTIRE

Informal saddle seat attire is required; no hunt attire. Suggested are conservative colors such as black, blue, grey, beige or brown jacket with matching jodhpurs. Day coat with jodhpurs also permitted. Boots and derby, soft hat or protective headgear required. Protective headgear may be worn without penalty. Contrasting hats, vests and/or ties are acceptable. Spurs, whip or crop optional, at the exhibitor's discretion.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF THE COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE HORSE

It is mandatory that horses be asked to halt on the rail, stand quietly, back and walk off on a loose rein at least one direction of the ring.

The halt should be obedient, smooth and balanced. The horse must not pull down on the rider's hands, throw its head and neck out, plant its front feet abruptly or take an excessively long time to stop. The horse should respond to the rider softly and quietly by giving to the bridle, stepping under behind, softening in the back and executing a smooth, easy stop or halt.

When asked to back, the horse should give to the bridle and the rider's legs and step backwards comfortably with even, unhurried steps.

A true flat walk must be demonstrated on a loose rein with horse's neck relaxed and head slightly lowered. Failure to demonstrate a true flat walk **MUST** be penalized. The walk off on a loose rein should not be hurried, but relaxed and pleasant with long, even steps. This is the horse's opportunity to stretch its back and neck a little, take a deep breath and chew or readjust its mouth on the bit.

The rider should not throw away or let go of the reins completely, showing total lack of contact and loss of control. The horse should not pull or jerk the reins from the rider's hands nor should the horse turn its head and neck upside down in a camel-like fashion.

The rider should give the horse some actual slack in the reins, allowing the horse to relax and stretch to meet and even chew the bit a little.

As the rider gathers the reins, the horse should obediently, softly, and quietly accept the contact, connect to the bit by stepping under from the hindquarters, elevating the forehead and resume the tasks at hand.

COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE SPECIFICATIONS

ATTITUDE:

Attitude is the horse's mental approach to performing, willingness to perform, relaxed, pleasant approach to performing the class requirements. Attitude is expressed by soft eyes, alert ears, quiet mouth and tail, and a pleasant look. The Country English Pleasure horse should be the most relaxed, easy going of the saddle seat type pleasure horses. A pleasant, willing-to-do attitude is of prime importance.

MANNERS:

Manners is the conduct or behavior with which the horse performs. Obedience and responsiveness to the rider, safety being of utmost importance, and the willingness to be guided and controlled exemplify them. Acceptance of the surroundings and other horses in the arena also contributes to manners.

PERFORMANCE:

Performance is the physical act of doing all of the required gaits, transitions from one gait to another, the execution or accomplishment of carrying out all the requirements of the class.

QUALITY:

Quality is determined by the degree of excellence, condition, presence, carriage, athleticism, balance and strength required to perform effortlessly and with finesse. A horse that is pleasing to the eye has quality.

CONFORMATION:

Conformation is the horse's correct structural form as it relates to the functions and performance of a Country English Pleasure horse.

SUITABILITY OF HORSE TO RIDER:

Suitability of horse to rider is the horse's appropriateness for that rider for Country English Pleasure. It is the horse's obedience to the rider with safety being all important.

County English Pleasure classes will be judged by the above definitions/specifications in this order:

AR138 Country English Pleasure Class Specifications

1. OPEN. To be shown at a walk, normal trot, strong trot, canter and hand gallop. To be judged on attitude, manners, performance, quality and conformation.
2. AMATEUR . To be shown at a walk, normal trot and canter. To be judged on attitude, manners, performance, quality, conformation and suitability of horse to rider.
3. LADIES, GENTLEMEN. To be shown at a walk, normal trot and canter. To be judged on attitude, manners, performance, quality, conformation and suitability of horse to rider.
4. JUNIOR HORSE. To be shown at a walk, normal trot and canter. To be judged on attitude, manners, quality, and performance.

Performance Classes - General

The following provisions shall apply for only the classes in the following sections: Park Section, English Pleasure Section, Country English Pleasure Section, Carriage Pleasure Driving Section, Formal Driving Section, Pleasure Driving Section, Country Pleasure Driving Section, Roadster Section, and Combination Class Section. When the judge calls for the lineup, exhibitors must continue in the same direction the class is working when bringing their entries to the lineup. Horses must come to the lineup at the gait requested. Judges must penalize entries that do not comply.

CREDITS OF THE COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE HORSE

SUITABILITY:

“These horses have a genuine desire to please their riders...”

A horse that can easily perform the requirements of the class with the necessary carriage and finesse will generally be suitable. However, this horse must not only have the physical ability to do these tasks, it must also have the manners and attitude appropriate to perform willingly.

“Their natural conformation allows them to carry the head and neck in a relaxed, upright position and serve as a balance arm.”

The Country English Pleasure horse should be an upright horse with a relatively natural high set neck and carriage, breaking over easily at the poll to allow the head to be carried easily in position. This horse must not have high action, but should give the appearance of strength, comfortable ease of motion and elegance. Strides should be fluid and ground covering while being cadenced, balanced front end to rear end, showing elasticity and freedom of movement. Even in minimal collection, there is some raising of the forearm that results in varying degrees of knee elevation, depending on conformation, suppleness and elasticity of the front limbs. This type of front limb motion should not be used with “high action.” (See description of “high action” – page 4).

MOVEMENT:

“These horses perform all the gaits correctly in an unassuming, unforced fashion while under light contact.”

All gaits must be performed with willingness and obvious ease, cadence, balance and smoothness. This cannot be achieved in the Country English Pleasure horse without some degree of collection. To understand collection, one must recognize what the horse and rider must do to achieve it.

The following two quotes explain it from the perspective of the horse and then the rider.

“The horse gathers himself for action by engaging his hindquarters, shifting his balance backward and lightening his forehand. His back rounds in a bascule and his neck arches and rises, especially at the base. His head is carried high and he flexes at the poll, which is the highest point of the horse. His movement becomes light and mobile, with shorter, higher strides and active hindquarters, and he is able to shift his balance instantly in any direction. Collection implies that the horse’s mechanism is “cocked”; he has great impulsion at his command and awareness; in nature it is seen in moments of excitement.”

- **Susan Harris; Horse Gaits, Balance and Movement**

“Collection is by pushing the seat and both legs up against the reins which are held equally in both hands. By driving the hind legs more under, the body of the horse will become shorter and his neck will be more beautifully shaped. Without

any further action on the part of the rider, the horse will raise his forehand by lowering his hindquarters. In this way, the necessary balance is achieved for an impressive pace; the activity of the hind legs will be stimulated; and the correctly arched back will be made to swing harmoniously...

- **Col. Alois Podhajsky – Complete Training to the Horse and Rider**

WILLINGNESS AND OBVIOUS EASE:

“...a quiet nature to do their task willingly, and the physical ability to do them easily.”

Willingness and obvious ease means the horse is naturally and athletically capable of doing the requirements of the class easily. The horse should not have to be urged and prodded continually to go forward, nor should the rider continually need to restrain the horse with a tight hold or a constant bumping on the bridle.

The horse should have the strength and balance necessary to propel itself forward with strong, reaching, ground-covering strides, reaching well up underneath its belly, using its back and hindquarters for impulsion. The horse's shoulders should be elevated, steps free-moving with reach. The overall expression of the horse should be pleasing.

CADENCE:

“...cadenced motion that emanates from moderate impulsion created from the hindquarters.”

Cadence expresses the quality of locomotion in which steps follow each other in uniform sequence, rhythm, and measure. Cadence is the sequence of well-regulated steps. The steps are resolute, lively, even and progressive in purpose. When strides are cadenced, they are pronounced, clear, decisive and elastic. They are even and regular.

BALANCE:

“They are totally balanced individuals...”

Balance is the horse's bodily poise, the state of equilibrium or equal relationship front to rear, the equality of movement between the front and rear end. The Country English Pleasure horse must never give the impression of traveling downhill or on the forehand. The shoulders should be light and free with easy motion. There should be proper engagement and impulsion from the hindquarters to carry the horse.

BALANCE AND CADENCE:

“Ideally their gaits result from a balanced, cadenced motion...”

Balance and cadence are sacrificed and gaits become impure and inconsistent when the horse is pushed or forced to collect or elevate beyond its own natural capabilities.

SMOOTHNESS:

“...have a free-flowing stride that causes them to comfortably and calmly move forward with grace and style.”

Smoothness comes from a relaxed, supple back and the horse's own easy way of going. A relaxed back allows the horse to propel itself upward and forward from the hindquarters without resistance in the neck and back. Resistance results in making the horse stiff. If the horse's gaits are uneven, stiff, short or choppy, the mouth rigid and the neck stiff, the horse's back is stiff and there is tension between the rider and the horse.

Relaxation in the back allows the horse to step under the push from the hindquarters reaching with cadence and balance. This also allows the horse to move with free, easy steps. Relaxation, ease of movement and suppleness in the back and neck allow smoothness in the gaits and transitions.

QUIET, RESPONSIVE MOUTH:

“...giving the appearance they enjoy their job, which makes them pleasing to watch.”

The mouth is quiet and responsive when the horse and rider are relaxed and working together rather than against each other. A quiet, responsive mouth shows the horse's willingness to be guided and controlled and shows the horse is comfortable doing the required tasks.

A quiet, responsive mouth does not mean the horse cannot move its mouth or lips, or for that matter, even open its mouth slightly, on occasion, to soften in the jaw or create saliva for softness and comfort. Normal movement or loosening of the jaw is acceptable and desirable for response and softness.

We do not want to see a horse gapping, gnawing, chomping, locking its jaw or neck and jaw out and pulling on the bridle. Nor do we want to see a horse whose mouth is locked, rigid, or stiff in the jaw or locked into a head position with the bit. Nor do we want to see the horse drop behind the vertical, behind the bit or be intimidated by the bridle.

There should be light contact with the horse showing acceptance of the bit as a means of communication. The horse should look comfortable in the bridle with a soft responsiveness to the rider's hands.

ATTITUDE:

“The attitude of the ideal Country English Pleasure horse is pleasant, confident, responsive and obedient.”

It is imperative that the horse give the distinct appearance of being a pleasure to ride. Attitude is the horse's mental approach to the job at hand and expression shown through behavior and conduct. While performing the criteria of the class, it

should do so in a pleasant, willing manner. The horse should be prompt without anticipating, relaxed without being dull, willing to perform and must be attentive to the rider. Good attitude is reflected in a soft eye, alert ears, relaxed back, a willingness to perform, a quiet mouth and tail and a generally pleasant look.

PRESENCE:

“Ultimately, these horses instill a great deal of confidence in those who ride or watch them and give the impression of being a true pleasure to ride.”

Presence is the manner in which a horse carries itself or its bearing. It is in a word, “style.”

FAULTS OF THE COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE HORSE

BAD ATTITUDE:

Bad attitude includes sour ears, swishing tail, avoiding contact with the bit, fussy mouth, rigid mouth, not performing with ease, smoothness and confidence, stress, agitated or showing resistance. A bad attitude must be severely penalized as it shows the horse’s unwillingness to perform and be a pleasure to ride. A good attitude is of utmost importance, for a good Country English Pleasure horse.

BAD MANNERS:

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

POOR PERFORMANCE:

Poor performance includes wrong leads, breaking gait, resistance, rough or abrupt transitions, heavy on the rider’s hands, or lack of response to rider’s aids.

HORSE NOT SUITABLE TO RIDER:

A horse that is not suitable to the rider is too much for the rider to control, a horse not willingly guided or controlled, that spooks or bolts, rears or bucks, and jeopardizes the rider’s safety.

UNTRUE GAITS:

Untrue gaits include uneven gaits, skipping and pacing, including forced or too high knee action, quick, short or choppy strides, clunky, too fast, falling out of balance or form, stiff-legged movement, or rough gaits.

CAUSES FOR ELIMINATION

1. Showing (horse) aggression or discontent toward rider or any other person in the arena.
2. Whip marks. NOTE: Judge must excuse from the ring, not just eliminate from consideration.
3. Clear evidence of fresh blood in the mouth, nose, chin, shoulder, barrel, flank, or hip areas.
4. Illegal Equipment/Appointments.
5. 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.
6. The use of glitter on or in the mane, tail, hair or hooves.

7. Violations of shoeing regulations.
8. Any horse leaving the ring without the exhibitor's volition is deprived of an award in that class.
9. Failure to be serviceably sound and in good condition (horse).
10. Horses shown with artificial appliances.
11. Abuse.

See chart on following page

COUNTRY ENGLISH PLEASURE CHART

COUNTRY PLEASURE CHART	GOOD	MINOR FAULT	MAJOR FAULT	ELIMINATION GENERAL ITEMS
WALK	RELAXED, FLAT FOOTED, MOVING FORWARD	A FEW HESITANT STRIDES	JIGGING, ANXIOUS, NOT WALKING, STANDING OR CONSISTENT CIRCLING IN A CORNER	BLOOD IN THE MOUTH, CHIN, SHOULDER OR FLANKS (AR105.6) LAME (AR105.1 – must be serviceably sound)
TROT	CADENCED, UNHURRIED, MODERATE SHIFT OF BALANCE POINT	A FEW MISSED STEPS, VARIED SPEED	BREAK OF GAIT, AGGRESSIVE GAIT, EXTREME SPEED, EXTREME SHIFT OF BALANCE POINT. HIGH ACTION, I.E. CONSISTENTLY TROTting OVER LEVEL	WHIP MARKS (AR105.6) ABUSIVE TREATMENT (AR105.4)
CANTER	STRAIGHT AND TRUE	CROOKED VARIED SPEED	CHARGY, WRONG LEAD, CROSS CANTERING, HIGH ACTION	FALL OF HORSE OR RIDER, IF DUE TO BAD MANNERS OF HORSE (AR109.2)
HAND GALLOP	TRUE CHANGE OF GAIT LONGER STRIDE	MINIMAL CHANGE OF STRIDE	CROSS CANTERING CHANGE OF LEAD, EXTREME SPEED	DANGEROUS TO OTHER EXHIBITORS (AR105.5)
STOP, BACK WALK ON A LOOSE REIN	STRAIGHT SQUARE HALT, STRAIGHT UNHURRIED BACK, RELAXED WALK WITH LOWERED FRAME. RELAXED GATHERING OF THE REINS.	CROOKED HALT, PREMATURE BACK, CROOKED BACK, HESITANT WALK, SLIGHT RESISTANCE TO THE GATHERING OF REINS	ANTSY OR NO HALT, REFUSAL TO BACK, FORCED BACK, NO LOOSE REIN, CHARGY OR NO WALK, NO LOWERED FRAME, NO RELAXED LOWERED FRAME MAJOR RESISTANCE TO THE GATHERING OF THE REINS	REARING, RUNNING BACKWARDS, BUCKING, OUT OF CONTROL (AR105.5 - these would be examples of dangerous to others and possibly to rider
			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.	