

ENGLISH PLEASURE



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ENGLISH PLEASURE

DESCRIPTION:

Good English Pleasure horses have a brisk, animated stride that allows them to comfortably move forward with authority, grace and elegance. Their gaits result from a balanced, cadenced motion that emanates from impulsion created by the hindquarters. It is this impulsion that generates the energy for the strong, elastic movement in their shoulders and front legs to implement the range of motion that takes place. Their natural conformation allows them to carry the head and neck in an upright position and serve as a balance arm.

The ideal English pleasure horses are bright, confident, and responsive, performing all gaits correctly. They should be balanced in all aspects: conformation, gaits and disposition. These individuals are athletes with the physical talent to do their tasks with strength and finesse, the good temperament to do them willingly and the inherent ambition to do them well. They have the spirit of a show horse and give the appearance they enjoy their job which makes them attractive and pleasing to the eye. Ultimately, these horses have a great deal of power and charisma, giving the impression of being exciting and a **real pleasure to ride**.

The English Pleasure horse's carriage and way of going should be based on established elements forming the criteria, and well thought out written rules that combine to make an ideal English pleasure horse. To determine what the ideal is, it helps to understand the requirements and criteria of the class.

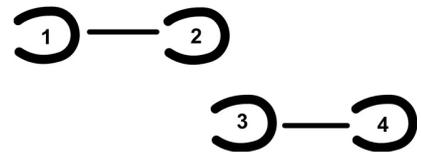
GAITS

It is imperative that the horse give the distinct appearance of being a pleasure to ride and display a pleasurable attitude. To this end, 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 when 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: brisk, true and flat-footed with good reach

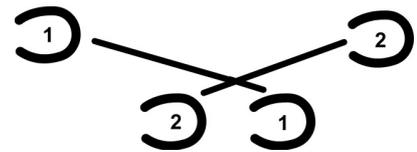
At the walk the horse must propel itself forward from behind with long, reaching steps. The horse's neck and back are relaxed as the horse moves from one foot to the other with no period of suspension, unevenness or jog. "Brisk" should indicate forward movement, not a sluggish, inhibited "almost walk." The horse should move forward with even, deliberate, reaching strides. 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 performed at medium speed with moderate collection.

The normal trot must be mannerly, cadenced, balanced and free moving. Posting is required. The trot is a two-beat 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 elegant carriage and strength from the hindquarters, lift and elevation through the horse's whole front end, not just the front legs. The trot should show equality of movement front end

and rear end. The trot should never look forced, labored or artificial. Moderate collection in the English pleasure horse allows for higher action or knee elevation and a greater drive or thrust from the hindquarters. Through moderate collection the English pleasure horse displays higher action or knee lift because the hindquarters step further under the horse's body, lifting the forehand and allowing the horse to lift its shoulders and knees. The sequence of footfalls are **(1) left hind and right fore, (2) right hind and left fore**



Strong trot - a two-beat gait: this trot is faster and stronger than the normal trot. It is performed with a lengthened stride, powerful and reaching, at a rate of speed which may vary between horses since each horse should attain his own strong trot in harmony with his own maximum natural stride. The horse must not be strung out behind. He should show moderate collection without exaggeratedly high action in front. He must present a willing attitude while maintaining form. The strong trot must be mannerly, cadenced, balanced and free-moving. Posting is required.

Maintaining cadence, balance and ease of movement, the strong trot is faster, showing a lengthened stride. The strong trot should be powerful with the horse balanced over its hindquarters, reaching with long, powerful strides elevating the forehand, stepping up to its ultimate stride, never pushed beyond. The horse should never lose cadence or balance. The strong trot must come from the powerful thrust of the hindquarters and a softness in the front end. Speed should not be the determining factor. The quality of the strong trot with cadence, balance front end and rear end, strength and ease of movement are factors to consider. The strong trot must never lose its purity of gait, and should not look forced, labored or artificial.

Canter - a three-beat gait: smooth, unhurried, with moderate collection, correct and straight on both leads. The canter should 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 canter should show moderate collection allowing the English pleasure horse's hindquarters to step further underneath itself, elevate its front end, lifting its knees higher, giving a lofty, rolling appearance to the canter. The canter should be uninhibited, showing reach and not short or choppy steps.

The canter should be moved into easily and be straight and comfortable 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 the long, free, ground covering stride under control. The amount of ground covered may vary between horses due to the difference in natural length of stride. The hand-gallop is not a fast collected canter but a true lengthening of stride, correct and straight on both leads. Extreme speed to be penalized. There shall be a distinct difference between the canter and the gallop. The hand-gallop should show a longer stride because of greater impulsion or thrust from the hindquarters propelling the horse forward. The greater thrust from the hindquarters results in higher elevation in the shoulders and knees. The horse should show a willingness to go forward while remaining light, calm and maintaining cadence and balance.

TACK

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. Contrasting hats, vests and/or ties are acceptable. Spurs, whip or crop optional, at the exhibitor's discretion.

ENGLISH PLEASURE SPECIFICATIONS**MANNERS:**

Manners are the conduct or behavior with which the horse performs. Manners include obedience and responsiveness to the rider, with safety being of utmost importance. The horse must exhibit a willingness to be guided and controlled. Manners also include acceptance of the surroundings and other horses in the arena. Manners are often first in order of priority because the safety of the rider and others in the arena are of prime importance.

PERFORMANCE:

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

ATTITUDE:

Attitude is the horse's mental approach to performing. Attitude is also the willingness to perform in a relaxed, pleasant approach to the class requirements. Soft eyes, alert ears, quiet mouth and tail, an overall pleasant look express a good attitude.

QUALITY:

Quality is the strength and athleticism required to perform the tasks of an English pleasure horse. It is the degree of excellence, condition, presence, carriage, athleticism, balance front to rear and strength required to perform effortlessly and with finesse. A quality horse is pleasing to the eye.

CONFORMATION:

Conformation is the horse's correct structural form as it relates to functions and performance of an English pleasure horse.

SUITABILITY OF HORSE TO RIDER:

Suitability is the horse's appropriateness for a particular rider in English pleasure. It is the horse's obedience to the rider with safety being all important (suitability is required in AOTR, AAOOTR, ATR, JOTR, JTR, AATR, Ladies, and Gentlemen classes).

English pleasure classes will be judged by the above specifications in this order:

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

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 ENGLISH PLEASURE HORSE

SUITABILITY

“They have the spirit of a show horse and give the appearance they enjoy their job which makes them attractive and pleasing to the eye.”

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

The English pleasure horse must be an upright horse with a naturally high set neck and head carriage, breaking over easily at the poll allowing for the head to be carried easily in position. This horse must move with power and strength emanating from the hindquarters, naturally lifting its shoulders, arching its neck and stepping well underneath itself reaching for ground with powerful strides, elevating and bending at the knees and hocks. This horse must use its shoulders freely, lifting its front legs and snapping them up while reaching forward. This horse must be bright and alert.

MOVEMENT

“Good English Pleasure horses have a brisk, animated stride...”

All gaits must be performed with willingness and obvious ease, cadence, balance and smoothness. Unlike the Country English Pleasure, these horses' motion exhibits “high action”. . 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.

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 a zealous spirit (attitude).

At the trot, high action is expressed in the front limb motion in two basic styles depending on the individual's conformation, training, breeding and/or attitude. Some fold their front limbs tightly by flexing their elbow, knee, fetlock and coffin joints acutely resulting with their front legs rising and falling in a "marching" type movement. Others seem to roll from the shoulder more causing a somewhat open leg to reach more with full extension occurring just prior to the foot's contact with the ground resulting in a "floating" type motion. Either style is acceptable as long as the horse is performing the trot correctly with balance and cadence.

WILLINGNESS AND OBVIOUS EASE

“These individuals are athletes with the physical talent to do their tasks with strength and finesse, the good temperament to do them willingly and the inherent ambition to do them well.”

Willingness and obvious ease means the horse is naturally and athletically capable of doing the requirements of the class easily. The horse should not need to be urged and prodded continually to go forward, nor should the rider continually need to restrain the horse with a right 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. Bending the hocks, lifting and 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, elevation and bend at the knees. The overall expression of the horse should be pleasing.

CADENCE:

“Their gaits result from a balanced, cadenced motion...”

Cadence expresses the quality of locomotion in which the steps follow in a 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 should be balanced in all aspects: conformation, gait and disposition.”

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

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

SMOOTHNESS:

“...that allows them to comfortably move forward with authority, grace and elegance.”

Smoothness comes from a relaxed, supple back and the horse’s own easy way of going. A supple back allows the horse to propel itself upward and forward from the hindquarters without resistance in the back and neck. Resistance results in a stiff horse. If the horse’s back is stiff, the neck and mouth will become rigid, resulting in tension between the horse and rider; uneven, stiff and choppy gaits. Relaxation, ease of movement and suppleness in the back and neck allow smoothness in the gaits and transitions.

ENGAGEMENT:

“...that emanates from impulsion created by the hindquarters.”

Engagement is the connection from the horse’s hindquarters through the back and neck to the bit and rider’s hand, with light contact on the bit. Engagement gives the horse’s forward movement a sense of energy. The hindquarters should be nicely engaged with the hind legs working well under the horse’s body with considerable power, not strung out behind or trailing behind. This engagement is the energy created by the hip, stifle and hock. How deeply the horse reaches its hind legs under the body depends on its conformation, training, confidence and relaxation in the back. Lack of engagement results in short, uneven steps, rear legs following rather than stepping under and pushing.

MODERATE COLLECTION

“It is this impulsion [created by the hindquarters] that generates the energy for the strong, elastic movement in their shoulders and front legs to implement the range of motion that takes place.”

When properly collected the horse's back is supple and rounded allowing both hind legs to step further under the horse's center of gravity. The hindquarters are then able to carry more weight and propel the body powerfully upward and forward. Because the center of gravity is shifted back the haunches or hindquarters carry more weight. This shift of weight allows the horse's hind legs to step under and push the horse's forehand upward, lightening, and freeing the shoulders. The forehand is lightened enabling the horse to elevate with its neck arched and the head carried elegantly. With the hindquarters carrying the weight, the forehand is lifted and the knee elevation increases with the degree of collection and the horse's own natural talent and strength.

GREAT PRESENCE:

“Ultimately, these horses have a great deal of power and charisma, giving the impression of being exciting and a real pleasure to ride.”

Presence is the manner in which a horse carries itself or its bearing. It is in a word, “style”. The outstanding individuals make their own “space”, even in a crowded arena.

FAULTS OF THE ENGLISH PLEASURE HORSE

BAD MANNERS

Bad manners includes wringing tail, pinned ears, rigid, open, bad or gaping mouth, cutting to the center of arena, balking, bolting, rearing, kicking, bucking, not responding to the rider. Bad manners must be severely penalized as they are a risk to the rider and others in the arena; remember judges are required to excuse unruly horses from the ring.

BAD PERFORMANCE

Bad performance includes wrong leads, break of gait, resistance, rough or abrupt transitions, heavy on the rider's hands, and lack of response to the rider's aids.

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, agitation or showing resistance.

UNTRUE GAITS

Untrue gaits include uneven gaits, skipping, pacing, racking, loss of cadence, and moving too fast to maintain balance and cadence.

POOR MOVEMENT

Poor movement includes out of balance front to rear, falling out of form, forced, labored or artificial looking, choppy or rough.

HORSE NOT SUITABLE TO RIDER

A horse not suitable to rider is too much for the rider to control or handle comfortably, a horse not willingly guided or controlled, a horse that spooks or bolts, rears or bucks, and a horse which jeopardizes the rider's safety or the safety of others in the arena.

CAUSES FOR ELIMINATION

1. Showing (horse) aggression or discontent toward rider or any other person in the arena.
2. Whip marks. **Note:** Judges 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.

CONCLUSION:

Judging is not an absolute. It is a matter of observation and evaluation.

Judging is based on certain established criteria and rules. However, in judging performance everything is relative. Each horse must be judged against the performance of the others in the class. Other criteria, such as manners, attitude and quality, must also be considered. All of the faults should be considered according to their severity and the depth of competition. Good judging depends upon correct observation of the finer points and the selection of the best horses for the purpose of the class. The best horse, performing the most correctly as established by the class criteria and specifications, should be the winner.