



ARABIAN HORSE ASSOCIATION

Judges & Stewards

WESTERN PLEASURE

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DESCRIPTION

- The good Western pleasure horse has a comfortable free flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with the individual’s conformation.
- It should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort. Ideally, the horse should have a balanced, sweeping motion that requires no more than light contact by the rider.
- The head and neck serve as a balance arm and are carried in a relaxed, natural position

appropriate for each individual’s own conformation.

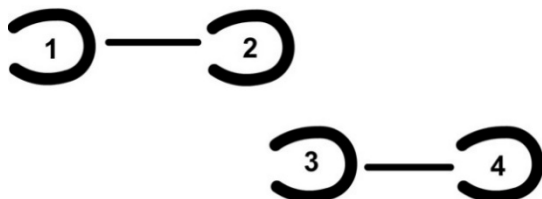
- Maximum credit should be given to the responsive, confident, willingly guided horse that performs all the required gaits correctly with strength and finesse.
- The horse should be balanced in all aspects; conformation, gait and disposition. Such a horse is an athlete that goes softly and gives the appearance of being fit and capable of the tasks.
- Ultimately, the horse is very eye appealing and gives the Impression of being a pleasure to ride.
- Light contact should be measured by a horse’s response to the rider’s hands, seat and legs and not merely by the tension in the reins.
- However, an excessively draped rein is just as undesirable as extremely tight rein.
- Subtle cues are desirable, while an absence of cues is not. The individual that willingly and quietly responds to subtle cues by the rider is performing with light contact.
- For performance criteria, see Western Pleasure Chart.

GAITS

Walk - A four beat gait; True, flat footed, and ground covering.

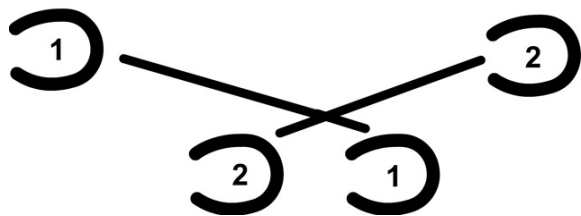
- The ideal walk is bright and ground covering with a slight over stride of the front hoof by the rear hoof. Some horses will exhibit subtle head movement. This slight head movement assists the brachiocephalicus neck muscle to move the arm and foreleg forward. This head movement is always acceptable as long as the horse is in balance.

- The walk should be a deliberate, sweeping motion which does not waste energy while responding to the guidance of the rider.
- A horse should have rhythm and use his legs to propel his body forward.
- You can count the four beats as the feet hit the ground. Each foot should leave the ground at the same pace as it landed. The sequence of foot falls are (1) left hind, (2) left fore, (3) right hind, (4) right fore.



Jog-Trot - A two beat diagonal gait; free, square, slow and easy.

- The horse should be relaxed through the back and have a true 2-beat diagonal gait at the jog-trot. His hocks are well under him and his front legs are reaching forward. There is a definite rise in the back which allows the legs to sweep underneath the horse.
- The horse should remain collected and moving forward in a smooth fashion. The sequence of footfalls are (1) left hind and right fore, (2) right hind and left fore.



Lope - A true 3 beat gait; smooth, slow, easy, and straight on both leads.

- A properly executed lope has a rhythmic, rolling effect which is truly beauty in motion. The sequence of footfalls for a lope on the right lead are (1) left hind, (2) right hind and left fore, (3) right fore.
- The beats of the lope do not take place in equal intervals, rather there is a slight hesitation between the one and two beats.

- In the good lope, the impulsion of the "drive leg" causes a graceful lift in the back and initiates the rolling effect of this gait. It is this lift that is responsible for the subtle, but definite, hesitation between the one and two beats. This hesitation allows the two diagonal legs to sweep under the horse. Finally, the "lead leg" swings forward and lands to balance the horse as the drive leg rises again to start the sequence over. A suspension takes place after the third beat as a result of this rhythmic, rolling effect. Absence of the hesitation will cause a failure for this suspension to take place and directly result in a compromise of gait correctness and quality.

Hand Gallop - Not merely an extended lope, but a real hand gallop; extreme speed to be



penalized. The genuine hand gallop has a very distinct difference from the lope.

- The good hand gallop derives from the further engagement of the hindquarter resulting in a lengthening of stride without sacrificing frame or cadence. It is bold and strong. It is the western pleasure horse's expression of elegance in motion.

NOTE: All gaits are to be considered equally when judging.

Backing

- In the lineup, horses may be asked to back in a straight line with no additional testing, returning to the lineup at a walk.
- Horses may be asked to back on the rail.
- Judges are reminded to adequately factor in a "poor," back in their final results.

WESTERN PLEASURE CHART

WESTERN PLEASURE CHART	GOOD	MINOR FAULT	MAJOR FAULT	ELIMINATION GENERAL ITEMS
WALK	Ground covering Flat footed Good attitude	Slow Not attentive Fast	Nervous Jigging Not walking Intimidated walk	Two hands on reins (except when using snaffle/ hackamore)
JOG	Good movement consistent Steady	Too slow Too fast Inconsistent rate & carriage	Not performing a two-beat jog Failing to jog both front and back Hard or rough riding Wogging Short stepping	Fingers between closed reins or more than one finger between split reins Kicking Prohibited equipment
LOPE	Good movement consistent Steady	Too slow too fast Inconsistent rate & carriage	Not straight improper leads Lugging/pulling, not performing a three-beat lope	Lameness Cueing horse in front of cinch
HAND GALLOP	True lengthening of stride & frame	Too fast Inconsistent rate & carriage	Extreme speed No distinction in change of frame obvious loss of control	
BACK	Proper flexion readily responsive Backs a straight line	Hesitating Not straight	Resistant, throwing head, gapping, pulling, refusal, rearing, failure to return to original place	

GENERAL	Uninterrupted gait Proper movement Obedient and soft Smooth Steady Proper flexion balance Good attitude Self-carriage	Over and under flexion Sour ears Switching tail inconsistent speed out of balance Poll too high or too low to throw horse out of balance improper or incomplete appointments transitions-excessive use of cues	Gaits not straight and true Agitated tail throwing head Bad mouth excessive use of bridle Gapping Constant breaking of gaits Obvious schooling intimidation Undue stress	Fall of horse or rider Blood Horse/rider interference with balance of class <i>Horses with an unnatural tail carriage (see AR105.2b) must be positioned last in the class.</i>
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CONDUCT

- Competitors enter the ring in a counterclockwise direction at the jog-trot.
- Light contact with horse's mouth must be maintained at all gaits.
- If bridles are to be checked, it is the sole decision of the judge to do so. The judge may designate the steward to check bridles at the out gate. Riders must dismount.
- A Junior Western Pleasure horse shown in either a hackamore or snaffle must never have been shown in any Arabian Competition/Division Western Pleasure event in a bridle. (Except Trail, Reining, Reined Cow Horse and Working Cow Horses. See Sub-Chapters 26 and 28)
- **UNNATURAL TAIL CARRIAGE** (defined in AR105.2b1) A horse exhibiting an unnatural Arabian tail carriage must be penalized and positioned last in the class.

APPOINTMENTS

- Competitors must be penalized for incomplete appointments, but not necessarily disqualified. Competitors must be eliminated for illegal equipment.

TACK

BRIDLE. Any western type headstall without noseband in conjunction with any standard western bit shall be allowed.

- A standard western bit is defined as having a shank with a maximum length overall of 8 1/2".
- The mouthpiece will consist of a round or oval bar 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter as measured one inch in from the shank.
- The bars may be metal, rubber, or synthetic material and may be inlaid but must be smooth or only latex wrapped.
- The bars may be encased in smooth 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter tubular barrels that rotate around the bars. Nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar) such as extensions, prongs, or rivets designed to intimidate the horse.
- Rollers attached to the center of the bit are acceptable and may extend below the bar.
- Jointed mouthpieces are acceptable and may consist of two or three pieces and may have one or two joints.
- A three-piece mouthpiece may include a connecting ring of 1 1/4" or less in diameter or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of two 2"), which lies flat in the mouth, or a roller or port as described herein.
- The port must be no higher than 3 1/2" with roller(s) and covers acceptable. Jointed mouthpieces, half-breeds, and spade bits are standard.
- Slip or gag bits, rigid donut mouthpieces and flat polo mouthpieces are prohibited.

- Roping bits with both reins connected to a single ring at center of crossbar shall not be used.
- Reins must be attached to each shank.
- Curb chains, if used, and flat leather chin straps must be at least 1/2" in width and lie flat against the jaws of the horse.
- No wire, rawhide, metal or other substance can be used in conjunction with or as part of the flat leather chin strap, or curb chain.
- Round, rolled, braided or rawhide curb straps are prohibited, except when used on a ring snaffle when applied below the reins.
- A light lip strap (often a shoelace) is permissible. A full explanation of it's use can be found in the USEF Western Equipment Booklet.
- Any rein design or other device which increases the effective length and thereby the leverage of the shank of a standard Western bit is prohibited. (see WS105.2)
- Junior horse classes require a snaffle bit or hackamore. Hackamore (Bosal) or standard snaffle are permitted in any class on horses five years old and under, unless prohibited in the prize list.
- A standard snaffle bit is defined as a single center jointed rounded, unwrapped, smooth metal mouthpiece of 5/16" to 3/4" diameter metal as measured from ring to 1" in from the ring with a gradual decrease to the center of the snaffle. The rings may be from 2" to 4" outside diameter of either the loose type, eggbutt, dee, or center mounted without cheeks.
- If a curb strap is used (with a snaffle bit) it must be attached below the reins.
- A hackamore includes a bosal rounded in shape and constructed of braided rawhide or leather and must have a flexible non-metallic core, attached to a suitable headstall.
- No other material of any kind is to be used in conjunction with the bosal, i.e., steel, metal or chains (Exception: smooth, plastic



electrical tape is acceptable if applied in a smooth, untwisted manner).

- Attached reins may be of hair, rope, or leather. Both hands must be visible to the judge. Two hands may be used on hackamore (Bosal) and Western snaffle reins.
- Split reins or closed reins are equally acceptable. Only one hand may be used on reins and hands must not be changed except to negotiate an obstacle in a Trail Horse Class.
- While working a cow in herd work/ranch cutting and Limited Reined Cow Horse, it is legal to hold the reins and the romal in one hand (rein hand). The other hand may be used to hold the saddle horn.
- Hand to be around reins.
- When ends of split reins fall on side of reining hand, one finger between reins is permitted. When using romal or when ends of split reins are held in hand not used for reining, no finger between reins is allowed.
- Rider may hold romal or end of split reins to keep them from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins provided it is held with at least 16 inches of rein between the hands.
- Rope, riata and/or hobbles are optional.
- Hackamore bits, cavesson type nosebands, martingales and tie-downs are prohibited.

Saddle: Any standard stock saddle with a horn is required, but silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. Tapaderos may not be used.

ATTIRE

- Riders shall wear Western hat, long-sleeved shirt with any type collar, trousers or pants (one piece long sleeved equitation suit is acceptable provided it includes a collar); chaps, shotgun chaps, or chinks, and boots.
- A vest, jacket, coat, and/or sweater may also be worn.
- Competitors with incomplete attire must be penalized.
- Spurs are optional at the discretion of the exhibitor; whips are not allowed except with side saddle. (see GR1310 Dispensations)

- Boots and/or bandages are permitted on entries in Jumping, Reining, Working Cow, Cutting, Reined Cow Horse and Gymkhana classes.

WESTERN PLEASURE SPECIFICATIONS

MANNERS:

- The conduct or behavior of the horse as it performs. The ability to be willingly guided and controlled with light contact.
- This includes the horse's acceptance of its surroundings and other horses in the arena.

PERFORMANCE:

- The execution and accomplishment of required tasks.

SUBSTANCE:

- The perception of strength and power to do any required task for an extended amount of time with minimal effort.

QUALITY:

- The degree of athleticism required to appear effortless and with finesse. This requires condition, presence, carriage, balance and excellence.

CONFORMATION:

- The correct structural form as it relates to the functions of a western pleasure horse.

ATTITUDE:

- The horse's mental approach to the entire discipline of western pleasure. A horse's attitude is reflected in his ears, tail, mouth, and way of going.
- A desirable way of going is recognized in a soft eye, relaxed back, a willingness to go forward comfortably, and an overall pleasant appearance.

SUITABILITY OF HORSE TO RIDER:

- The horse's appropriateness for that rider for western pleasure determines suitability of horse to rider. (ATR, JTR, AATR, AOTR, AAOOTR, JOTR, Ladies to Ride, and Gentlemen to Ride classes)

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

OPEN. To be shown at a walk, jog-trot, lope and hand gallop. Extreme speed to be penalized. To be judged on manners, performance, substance, quality, conformation and attitude. In the lineup, horses may be asked to back in a straight line with no additional testing, returning to the lineup at a walk. Horses may not be asked to back on the rail.

AMATEUR. To be shown at a walk, jog-trot and lope. To be judged on manners, performance, suitability of horse to rider, substance, quality, conformation and attitude. In the lineup, horses may be asked to back in a straight line with no additional testing, returning to the lineup at a walk. Horses may not be asked to back on the rail.

LADIES, GENTLEMEN. To be shown at a walk, jog-trot and lope. To be judged on manners, performance, suitability of horse to rider, substance, quality, conformation and attitude. In the lineup, horses may be asked to back in a straight line with no additional testing, returning to the lineup at a walk. Horses may not be asked to back on the rail.

JUNIOR HORSE (five years and under). To be shown at a walk, jog-trot and lope. To be judged on substance, quality, performance, manners and attitude. In the lineup, horses may be asked to back in a straight line with no additional testing, returning to the lineup at a walk. Horses may not be asked to back on the rail.

CREDITS OF THE WESTERN PLEASURE HORSE:

PROPER ENGAGEMENT:

"Ideally, they should have a balanced, sweeping motion that requires no more or less than light contact by their riders."

- The connection from the horse's hindquarters through the back and neck to

the bit and the rider's hand with light contact is "engagement".

- Engagement gives the horse's forward notion a sense of energy. It is the appropriate amount of energy generated by the hip, stifle, and hock. This causes the hind legs to be working under the horse's body with moderate power, not strung out or trailing. How deeply the horse reaches underneath itself with the hind legs (amount of engagement) depends on its conformation, training, confidence, and relaxation.

PRESENCE:

"Ultimately, they are very eye appealing and give the impression of being a pleasure to ride."

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

BALANCE:

"They should be balanced in all aspects: conformation, gait, and disposition."

- Balance is the overall poise of the horse. Every dimension of the western pleasure horse should be in a state of equilibrium. In other words, opposing forces that comprise each aspect of the ideal western pleasure horse meet "somewhere in the middle."

GOOD ATTITUDE AND MANNERS:

"Maximum credit should be given to the responsive, confident, willingly guided horse..."

- The excellent western pleasure horse must appear to enjoy his tasks and respond to the rider readily.

NATURAL, FREE, AND EASY MOTION:

"The good western pleasure horses have a comfortable, free flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with their

conformation. They should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort."

- The western pleasure horse's origin stems from the old west. The cowboy needed a comfortable horse that could take him considerable distance. In order to do so, the excellent western pleasure horse needs this type of motion.

NATURAL HEAD CARRIAGE:

"The head and neck serve as a balance arm and are carried in a relaxed, natural position appropriate for each individual's own conformation."

- Without the head being carried in a natural position the horse will have to find other means to compensate for not being able to balance his frame. This generally results in a compromise in his motion, attitude, and/or presence.

CONDITION:

"These horses are athletes that go softly and give the appearance of being fit and capable of their tasks."

- Condition is exuded by muscle tone, depth of muscle, clean fine bone, balance front to rear, good carriage, and a dignified presence.

EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE:

"...that performs all the required gaits correctly with strength and finesse."

- Not only must the excellent performers be correct, but they must accomplish their tasks with a degree of difficulty by doing their tasks well. This requires strength (substance) and finesse (quality).
- The excellent performer has the strength to work with delicacy and refinement in their execution for as long as it takes to conduct the class.

USEF has a Western Equipment Manual on line.

This is a helpful resource for identifying the legality of a bit. DO double check the rule book though, in case the manual has not been updated to reflect the most current rules.

Remember: AR144 rules govern equipment, not the Western (WS) rule chapter.

REMEMBER

- Judging is not absolute. It requires observation and evaluation. In other words, it is exactly what it says it is: A Matter of Judgment.
- It is based on certain criteria (class specifications) and rules; in judging the

western pleasure horse everything is relative.

- All faults should be considered according to their severity and the depth of the competition. Each fault is a void in one or more of the class specifications. However, a minor fault may not be elimination and it may not even allow a superior individual to lose a class amongst a weak field of competitors.
- The best horses in a particular western pleasure class on a particular day should always win, even if those horses fall far short of being excellent individuals.
- Good judging depends upon correct observance of the fine points and the selection of the best western pleasure horses in that class.

RESOURCES:

<https://www.usef.org/forms-pubs/pEljSmr3BAU/western-equipment-booklet>

Prepared by the

Education & Evaluation Commission and the
Judges & Stewards Commissioner
6030 Greenwood Plaza Blvd, Suite 100
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
303-696-4539