

Show Tips

Making Your First Show Successful

Do your homework

Review the rules for the show. Make sure you understand what is judged in each type of class (To see a class description, click on that class in the class list) that you intend to enter. Look up your horse's breed standard on the internet. Some horses are shown with a flowing mane and tail, others with braids, bands, or a French braid.

Set Goals

Showing isn't about getting a blue ribbon, it's about setting realistic goals to measure you and your horse's improvement. Before you decide to come to a show, set a goal for yourself and/or your horse. Your goal may be as simple as getting the correct diagonals or leads in a particular class. In fact for your first show, simply getting around the ring without any wrecks is a great goal. That way, you can be successful even without getting any ribbons.

Horse Preparation

Do all the horse preparation possible the night before. It takes time to wash, clip, and braid/band a horse for a show. Once your horse is looking great, put a sheet on him and keep him in a stall overnight. Whatever you do, never turnout a wet horse—the first thing they do is find the dirtiest spot possible and roll.

Trailer Preparation

Make a check list of what you will need and load your trailer the night before.

- Hay net full
- Water Bucket
- Manure fork and muck bucket (you will be expected to clean up after your horse)
- Grooming kit [Curry Comb, Hard Brush, Soft Brush, Mane and Tail Comb or brush, Wash Rags, fly spray, spay on hair polish(never spray where your saddle goes), etc.]
- Show halter and lead shank
- Clean Saddle and Saddle Blanket, Clean Bridle (See "[turnout](#)" for a list of acceptable and unacceptable tack)
- Your show clothing—don't forget your ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet and riding boots (See "[turnout](#)" for tips on what judges want to see)
- Personal Water bottle and snacks and/or money for the concessions stand
- Sun screen and bug spray
- Folding chairs for you and your supporters
- COGGINS Certificate and Self-Evaluation of Horse Health Form (State Law requires these and you cannot show without them)

Arrive early

You will need to register for classes and check for any patterns you will be required to follow, unload, groom, tack up, warm-up and be ready to go at the in gate before the final call for your first class. If you have plenty of time, this can be a relaxing and enjoyable time. If you are late, you will feel stress and not be able to do your best as you hurry into the ring. In warming up your horse, be sure to follow show rules regarding when and where you are allowed to warm up and be sure to follow ring etiquette for

safety purposes. Generally, horses are allowed to do flat work in the ring prior to the start of a show and during specified breaks in the schedule. Most, but not all, shows do not allow you to jump over-fences courses in the ring prior to classes, but will have warm-up jumps set up elsewhere on the grounds. Likewise, practicing the trail obstacles the day of the show is never allowed.

Registration

Most shows, including this one, will have a table with a registration form that will need to be filled out. At some shows you may have to fill out a form for each class you enter. Other shows will have a single form that lists all the classes and you simply have to check off the classes you intend to enter. WCHC shows generally have a check off type registration form. You will need to fill out and sign the form (If you are under 18, you will need a parent or guardian to sign it). Please be sure you understand the rules regarding who is eligible to enter each division and any cross-entering restrictions. These restrictions prevent more advanced riders from having an unfair advantage over those who are still learning. Once your registration form is filled out, you will need to bring it to the window along with your entry fee and a copy of your Coggins Certificate and a Self-Evaluation of Equine Health Form. The registration people will assign you a number to wear and double check your entry. It is a courtesy to the smooth running of the show, if you know what you want to enter and then stick to it. It is very difficult to process the paperwork in order to provide the judge with a class list. People who add, change and drop classes repeatedly after initial registration make this process that much more difficult. If for some reason you find that you do need to make changes or drop a class, please have someone report these changes to the registration staff ASAP so they can make the appropriate changes.

Numbers and Points

When you register, each rider/horse team is given a number. If you are riding more than one horse, then you will need separate registration forms for each horse as you will be considered as separate entities and will therefore be given two numbers, one to wear while riding each horse. In shows where points for division championships are computed, points are assessed per horse/rider team. Therefore points you earn with one horse, will not be added to points you earn with a second mount. Likewise, if your horse is ridden by another rider, that rider will need a separate entry form and will be assigned a separate number and earn separate points. To conserve resources, we encourage people to retain their numbers and use the same number throughout the show season, or if this is your only show, return your number at the end of the day to be reused in future shows. Your number should be pinned or tied to your back when you enter the ring. Some saddle blankets are designed to hold a number, this too is acceptable. This preparatory show will not be tracking points as no division champions will be awarded, but most of the other WCHC events planned through the season do compute points and give out division awards. At these shows a first place is worth 6 points, a second is worth 5 and so on.

Listen to the Announcements and Keep Track of Which Class is in the Ring

You need to be at the in gate ready to enter the ring by the time the previous class is receiving their ribbons. There will be an announcement indicating that entrants for a particular class may enter the ring and the gate will be opened. If all horses expected are not in the ring, there is usually a last call for the class and then the gate is closed. Once the gate is closed, no additional entries may enter the ring.

Entering the Ring

There are two general procedures for entering the ring depending on the type of class. In showmanship, halter, many equitation, and over-fences classes you will generally be asked to enter the ring one horse at a time, perform a specified pattern which is posted at the beginning of the show and then may or may not be asked to do additional work either independently or as a group with the whole class. Know your

pattern and follow the judge's directions. If you have questions regarding the expectations, be sure to ask **before** the class begins, not as you are entering the ring.

Other classes such as pleasure have all the horses enter the ring at a walk. It is traditional to enter the gate and turn right to circle the ring at a walk in a counter clockwise direction until all the horses have entered and the gate has been closed. The announcer will then indicate that you are being judged and the judge will signal the announcer to tell you what to do such as walk, trot/jog, canter/lope and change directions so listen for the announcements. Occasionally a class will be too large to work in the ring as a whole group. In these cases, which group you are to ride with will be announced over the P.A. system or directed by the ring steward. The best riders of each group will then be asked to return to the ring for additional work and final placing.

Ring Etiquette

As you follow the announced directions, you need to follow some simple rules.

First, spread out as much as possible. This allows the judge to get a clear unobstructed view of you and your horse which is what you want. It also prevents safety issues of horses crowded together. NEVER ride up on the tail of another horse. The rule of thumb is that there should always be at least a horse length between you and any other horse. If you have to pass a slower horse, be looking ahead and move to the inside giving yourself plenty of room. Better yet, make a small circle to the inside so that the other horse will have a chance to get further ahead leaving you plenty of space to ride.

Second, always ride in control. Hopefully you have entered a class at a comfortable skill level for you and your horse. Try to stay relaxed and have a fun time. If you are tense, your horse will be tense and be more likely to forget all the good lessons you've been working on. If for some reason, a dangerous condition develops in the ring with a fallen rider or a horse out of control, you will be asked to stop. Do so calmly and let the ring steward and other ground help control the situation. If your horse is the one causing the disturbance, do your best to calm him and ask for help. It is better to leave a class and try again in the next time than to let you, your horse, or someone else get hurt.

Third, follow the judge's directions. The judge is the "boss" of the ring. His or her decisions are always final. The judge will signal the announcer's stand with directions for what the class should do. For classes where you are completing a pattern individually, the judge may give you individual directions, follow them.

Lining Up

At the end of a class (with the exception of classes where horses do not complete the class together in the ring), you will be asked to line up facing a particular direction. Generally, when asked to line up, horses should be brought to stand shoulder to shoulder with plenty of space between them. Many times, the judge will walk down the line, asking each horse to back individually. If the judge does this, four steps is usually adequate and you may move forward into the line up again when the judge moves on to the next horse. After the judge has decided on the placing, the judge's card will be taken to the announcers stand.

Depending on the size and level of the show, the judge may take a few minutes to provide riders with some feedback before the final results are announced. In a schooling show, the judge will usually spend

more time on this feedback session. In a rated show, it is unlikely that feedback will be given. Because our preparatory schooling show is just that, a preparation for future showing, we have asked our judge to spend as much additional time as needed at this point working with each rider to help them understand what they are doing well and what they need to work on. Note that this is not normal show practice, but is provided here for your benefit as you prepare for future shows.

Collecting Ribbons

Once the judge is done talking to entrants, the announcers stand will announce the results. Sometimes, they will start with the last place and move to first, sometimes they will start with first and move to last. Either way, when you hear your number (and usually your name and horse's name) you need to move to the "out" gate at a walk. If you find that horses are blocking the gate, keep your distance and wait patiently for your turn. Collect your ribbon at the gate, but continue moving completely away from the "out" gate to prevent traffic jams of horses coming up behind you. Once all those receiving ribbons have left the ring, the horses not receiving a ribbon should exit the ring at the out gate—again being careful not to crowd and moving well away from the gate area once they have exited the ring.

Procedural Modifications You Might Encounter

In many shows, there will be a division of two or more classes back to back in which many, if not all, of the same riders are riding. Rather than exiting the ring to simply hurry around and come right back in, ribbons may be held until after the last class in the division. In this case, the announcers stand will indicate that they will announce the standings, but that horses are to remain in the ring. Once all the ribbon winners are announced, you will be asked to move back out on the rail at a walk. Once all horses are circling the ring at a walk, the next class will begin. At the end of all classes in the division, riders will pick up their ribbons for all classes in the division as they exit.

Tips For Riding in the Ring

- Judges are always looking for a nice calm, collected horse that responds quietly and consistently to commands. Try to keep your horse moving at a steady rate. Repeatedly speeding up and slowing down will knock you down in the final ribbons.
- Judges are also looking for riders who look like they are having fun and are proud of the horse they are riding. Sit up and smile naturally.
- Each time you are asked to change gaits, quietly ask your horse to do so. If, for example, your horse picks up the wrong lead, quietly bring him back to a trot and ask him to pick up the correct lead again. Continue trying without getting upset until your horse either picks up the correct lead or the class is asked to change back to a trot or walk. Avoid fighting your horse, it is better to have him take an extra step before changing gaits or to keep trying to get something right, than it is to get upset. Remember, a show is just for fun. If things didn't go perfectly, there will always be other shows where you can try again.
- When asked to change directions, turn your horse to the inside of the ring and make a nice smooth moderate sized circle that avoids other horses or obstacles such as jumps that might be in the ring. Be sure that if you are posting a trot when you change directions, to change diagonals. Likewise, if your horse is asked to do a pattern where you have to change directions at a canter/lope, make sure you change leads. A good simple lead change is better than fighting your horse over an unsuccessful flying change.
- Finally, as always, good sportsmanship is critical. Not getting a scrap of ribbon or even a trophy isn't worth feeling bad about. Learn from your experiences. Remember, even if you don't agree

with the judge, try to learn from your experiences and remember there will be other shows in your future.

Supporters can help

Many people have family and friends who come to support them at the show. Encourage your supporters to show good sportsmanship too. However, make sure they know that once the gate is closed on a class that, you can be disqualified if they try to coach you from outside the ring. Only positive encouragement is allowed.

Your supporters can also help the show organizers. There is always a need for additional helpers to open and close gates, handle jumps, assist ring crew, do final clean up, etc. If any of your supporters are willing to help out, please have them volunteer at the announcer's stand. It takes a lot of work to organize and put on a show. All of our shows are run by volunteers who simply want to make your show day a success. You and your supporters can do a great deal by being patient and helping out when you see that help is needed.

Leaving the show

When all your classes are done, you will want to make sure that you have collected all of the things you brought with you. This includes manure. The Agricultural Education Center is a County Park and we have been asked to show courtesy to other park users by insuring that all manure, hay, garbage, etc. has been taken home with us so that the grounds look as nice when you leave as they did when you came in.