

# Guide to Showing & Presentation

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is hard to know where to start when you first decide to give showing a try. This is a guide to the basic principals we have followed while showing my Show Thoroughbreds & Warmbloods, the basic principals are the same it is fine tuning which is different for the various showing disciplines.

## **SHOW PREPARATION PYRAMID**

### **HORSE** (Initial consideration)

Confirmation, movement, attitude & presence

Presentation is important; however you need a good foundation if you want to stand out in the crowd. Things to consider when looking at horses with the intention of showing them are confirmation, movement, attitude and presence.

If purchasing a horse for a specific discipline take your time, do your home work. Where possible go to as many events as you can as a spectator, observe what works well. The right choice now can make all the difference in the years to come.

If you already own a horse decide what show activities are appropriate. A Palomino for example may look out of place in open completion, but could have a successful show career competing in Palomino specific classes.

### **DIET** (Daily attention)

Hard feed supplements & additives

The diet you choose for you horse is very much a personal thing. It is a matter of finding what works best for you and your horse.

The three main options are Grass / pasture, manufactured blends, own hard feed blend. Horses kept solely on a pasture diet for example may develop a grass belly in spring and their coat may be a little rougher than a horse that is fed supplements. Manufactured blends are convenient, but they are often expensive and you don't really know exactly what your horse is eating. Making your own mix using raw products takes a little extra effort but you have the ability to adjust the diet as needed.

There is no right or wrong with what you choose but if you are planning to show your horse it is important to have an ultimate goal in mind and work towards it each day. I swear by a few simple supplements to keep my horses healthy and shiny: 1. Electrolytes 2. Good quality oil 3. Iron supplement for coat colour 4. Magnesium for hoof health and calming properties 5. A quality topline supplement

### **RUGGING / STABLING** (Daily attention)

Dress your horse for "4 Seasons"

Stabling your horse is ideal for best show preparation results, however not all of us have access to stabling facilities. Similar results can be obtained from rugging your horse appropriately. Once again there is no right or wrong way to rug your horse it is a matter of finding what works for you and your horse.

Your horse's wardrobe doesn't have to be instantaneous; you can build it up when you have the opportunity. To make the most of your rug budget avoid paying full price. Look for end of season sales and "backyarders" who make rugs from home.

Take care to purchase well cut correct fitting rugs to avoid problems such as rub marks on the shoulders or flanks. Neck rugs or hoods can often cause problems with the mane being rubbed out, this happens when the area overheats. A light canvas with no lining can work well. Keep a close eye on your horse and adjust rugs accordingly before a minor problem turns to something ugly if you are planning to show. My preferences for rugging in Summer is a flag combo or a shadecloth combo. During winter my horses wear a ripstop combo or rug/hood, depending on the weather they may wear an unlined canvas during the day. At night I like to use either wool rugs or Mirotec rugs while they are stabled. If they are out in the paddock I generally use a synthetic

combo.

The key to keeping your horses 'summer' coat during winter comes down to light..stables are almost necessary for this, although some horses do naturally keep short coats year round. My stable lights turn on at 4.30pm then off at 10pm then back on at 5am until 6.30am

### **EXERCISE** (Weekly)

Muscle tone, fitness & education.

Exercise and training is very much a matter of "Horses for courses". Choose a program that suits you and your horses needs, be realistic. Give your self plenty of time to get to know your horse so there will be no surprises when the competition day arrives.

Allow time in your program for mixing it up a bit. A trail ride can be excellent for giving you and your horse a break from arena work and at the same time build fitness and muscle tone.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Coaching by an experienced instructor can be very helpful. I personally work my horses 5 days a week, this is also important to keep their coats short and 'glowing' as sweat and exercise gets the blood pumping through their system.

### **GROOMING** (Weekly)

Regular brush, occasional wash

Regular grooming a little at a time is recommended. Grooming time can be a great opportunity for a thorough visual assessment. It's important to take the time to step back and look at the big picture your horse is portraying. Curry comb to remove loose hair follow with soft brush and hot towel for best results. Pick feet out, oil hooves, assess them for growth and contact your farrier as necessary. While you are grooming tune in to the physical condition of your horse, it can be a good time to reflect on the rest of your preparation regime. Adjustments to diet, rugging, and exercise might be required. Over washing your horse can strip the natural oils from their coat. Choice of shampoo is critical. Shampoo designed specifically for horses is recommended. Correct pH balance will clean thoroughly with out stripping the oils from their coat.

### **SHOW TIME SPRUCE UP** (Just prior to show)

Wash, trim, plaiting & makeup

The show time spruce up has its greatest impact if you have put the effort and time in to all other aspects of your show preparation. It should simply be an extension of your grooming plan. There are many products on the market targeted towards the final show time spruce up. Experiment a little; ask experienced people what they use. Observe grooming kits when you go to competitions. A fine wipe with a bit of baby oil can be just as effective as a purpose built coat polish but the price tag is very different. Makeup is used to highlight features on you horses face and body. Applying make up is an art. Have a practice at home when you do not have the pressure on. Use what gives best results for you and your horse.

### **SHOW TIME CHECKLIST**

There many things to remember when you want to go to a show. A check list can be helpful so important items are not forgotten or over looked. Here is a sample of what a checklist might look like, customise it to suit you. After you have been to a few shows this will all fall into place and a checklist will probably not be necessary.

#### 1. CHECK GEAR

In good order? Safe? Clean?

#### 2. OVERALL GROOMING

Kit containing all your tools is handy

#### 3. WASHING

Socks, legs, mane, face and tail. (Whole horse if necessary)

#### 4. CLIPPING / TRIMMING

Socks, bridle path, ears, whiskers.

#### 5. PLAITING

#### 6. MAKEUP & HOOF PREPARATION

## 7. ENTRIES

## 8. SHOW TIME

Proceed to warm up area then show ring.

### **YOUR FIRST SHOW**

While owning a riding a horse is a wonderful experience in itself, many riders eventually feel the urge to take their horse out into the world of horse showing. Showing is a wonderful way to challenge yourself and your horse and to get a chance to compare yourself to others in the same discipline.

There are shows available for riders of all ages and levels of experience. The first step is finding what shows are available for your discipline. Not all shows have classes for all kinds of horses or riders. Once you have found a show take a look at their class list. It is important to understand what is required in each of the divisions before deciding which ones to enter. The classes are not always what you might expect at a glance. For example, a pleasure class might look like it should be performed out on the trail, but in fact it is in a closed ring with a group of horses who are judged for how quiet and comfortable they are to ride. If you are unsure what any of the classes are contact the show organiser and they will be glad to help you.

Whether you are a seasoned show competitor or plan on doing your first horse show this year, the following tips should help you enjoy the season.

**Preparation starts at home** -For a horse to show well, he needs to be healthy and happy. Your horse should have a good diet, regular worming and vaccination schedule. His hoofs should be trimmed regularly and, if you want a good performance in the show ring, there is no substitute for spending lots of time with him. That glow of health comes from good feed and lots of grooming. He needs your love and wants to please you. Show him what you want, tell him when he does it right and you will be well on your way to a top show performance!

You can not prepare for a show the day before and you should not expect to do anything differently the day of the show than you do when you are practicing or taking lessons. Like any other athletic event you must train and practice for the event to be a success. Your confidence is much easier to acquire when you know you are prepared. Don't try a new bit, a new saddle, or new technique the day of the show. Be sure that your preparation consists of basic ground manners, tying, and loading into the trailer, not just the showing in the ring. Before the show, spend some time practicing the things you plan to do at the show. Make sure that your horse listens well and is used to working with other horses in the ring. If you can, take your horse out to get him used to working at a place other than your home.

The day before the show spend a lot of time cleaning your horse. It is a sign of respect to the judge to present a well-groomed horse. If your discipline requires braiding you should make an effort to braid your horse. Even at the lower levels it is better to show a horse braided if it suits your discipline and the practice is great, especially if you plan to try showing at the higher levels in the long run. Your tack should also be thoroughly cleaned and polished. Don't use any products that would make your saddle slippery, you would not want to have a spill thanks to slippery tack.

Set aside some clean brushes and bandages to use on the show day.

Before going to bed make sure that you have everything packed up and ready to go. Show mornings are stressful enough without having to race around trying to find things to take with you.

**Bring Help** -The biggest job of a helper is to make sure you never have to leave your horse unattended. Helpers are great for closing trailer doors behind your horse as you lead him in, helping with last minute grooming after you have your show clothes on, helping you keep track of time, and providing moral support.

**Leave your ego at home** - Once you enter the show grounds you are in the hands of lady luck. You have little control over many of the situations you will be placed in during the day. There will most likely be many riders and horses of equal or better riding levels. You may or may not agree with the judge's decisions. If you are going to enjoy showing, you must acquire an attitude that will allow you to "roll with the punches."

Show grounds are high tension arenas for everyone. If you have done the best job you could do in a particular class, given the circumstances that occurred in that class (for example you got cut off, your horse spooked, or you were just too nervous to check your diagonal) you should feel proud and calmly say, "I did my best".

**Manage your time** - On the morning of the show be sure to plan to arrive at least an hour before your classes are to begin. This will give you time to sign in, finish preparing your horse, get your horse tacked up and warm up. If you are not sure what time you should be there contact the show for an estimate and arrive half an hour earlier than they suggest. It is better to be too early than too late.

When you arrive go to the show office before unloading your horse. They will sign you in, and let you know where things are at. Once you are signed in return to your trailer and unload your horse. If you have time take your horse for a little walk around the show grounds so they know what to expect. Finish your final prepping on your horse. Warm up your horse, but don't warm your horse up for so long that he is too tired to perform well in his classes. How much time your horse will need depends on his temperament and the level of athletic ability you will be asking of him. In general, try to be on your horse about fifteen to twenty minutes before you have to go in the ring. Dismount and give your horse a break in between classes. Take time to rest and let your horse chill out at the trailer/stall with some hay and water. Give yourself time to relax, socialise and eat. If your stomach feels full of butterflies, try to eat a little bit several times during the day. Many riders have gotten a pounding headache, or even passed out in the ring because they did not eat anything all day.

**Show Rules** - If you are new to showing, make sure you know what rules you will be showing under and get a copy of them. There are different rules for different riding disciplines. Understand the different divisions of the competition and make sure you enter the classes that are suited to your riding level.

**Safety First** - Ring etiquette is one important factor in being safe. If the rider of a nervous or misbehaving horse loses control, you want to be as far away from that horse as possible. You must be "on your toes" the entire time you are on the show grounds. You never know when a baby stroller, umbrella, crackling P.A. system or a host of other "scary monsters" will startle your horse. Even if your horse is very quiet, you need to be alert for other horses that may "spook" at such situations.

Making sure your transportation has good tires, proper trailer brakes and working lights is sometimes overlooked in our excitement to leave the barn.

If you use a hay net, be sure it is tied up high enough that the horse can not get a foot tangled in it, and make sure it is tied securely enough that it will not come untied as he pulls at it.

Be sure you know how to tie a quick release knot and use it every time you tie your horse. At the show, your horse should not be tied long enough to graze.

Pack a first aid kit for yourself and your horse.

## **MANE CARE AND SHOW PREPARATION**

The mane is a horse's crowning glory. Whether you prefer his tresses long and silky or short and tidy, his mane says a lot about your horse keeping. But mane management isn't just for vanity's sake or for show horses. A mane's beauty comes from its health and it, in turn, helps maintain your horse's health. The main purpose of a mane is to keep insects away from your horse's head and neck, where they could feed and deposit eggs.

A horse with a ratty mane looks neglected. Also, an unkempt mane can trap dirt, sweat and moisture, leading to skin conditions that are itchy and uncomfortable; this could cause your horse to start rubbing his neck against everything within reach to scratch — ripping out hunks of hair in the process. And snarls and tangles can catch on splinters, stall edges, branches and knots on trees. Creating a healthy, gorgeous mane that catches the judge's eye — or just makes your stable mates jealous — isn't terribly complicated, but it does require diligent care. Not only will you need to protect the mane from nature, other horses and even your own horse's actions, but you'll also need to do a bit of nurturing.

### **Shampoo and Conditioning**

Washing clears away bits of burrs, leaves, and oil build-up that can cause fungi and inhibit growth. It also flushes bacteria from the skin's surface, reducing the chances of skin infections. While individual horses' needs vary, in warm weather, plan on washing your horse's mane every 2 weeks or so depending on your training schedule and climate. You may find your horse does better on a weekly schedule, with daily rinsing without shampoo after workouts. Or you could be one of the lucky ones, whose horse only needs a deep cleansing every few weeks to avoid summer itch.

Every time you shampoo your horse's mane, you should also apply a conditioner — unless you're planning on braiding or banding for a show, since conditioners can cause braids to come undone and bands to slide out. Not only will conditioning help build up the hair and keep it healthy, it'll also ease combing out the snarls and tangles. Large twists will need to be untangled with fingers before combing, or you will tear the mane.

### **Brushing**

Brushing should be kept to a minimum. Using the right brush and technique can minimize hair breakage. Mane combs are designed to help you gently detangle snarls and smooth hair with large teeth and wide spaces. Mane brushes should have wide-spaced, flexible bristles with rounded tips so they won't scratch your horse's skin. You can use human hairbrushes of this description, but keep in mind they may not be as sturdy and their bristles may not be as deep.

When brushing, first work through the hair with your fingers to find the major knots, then gently detangle these with your fingers, then with a wide-toothed comb, from the tips of the mane up to the base. Once the major snarls have been cleared, gently take the brush through the mane — again from tips to top — to find any smaller snags, then brush down from the skin at the base of the mane to the tips in long, gentle sweeps. Make sure the brush goes through all the layers and that you begin at your horse's "scalp" at the base of the mane.

Brushing this way stimulates circulation where the mane grows; cleans accumulated skin, dirt and oil at the mane's base; and maximizes the shine. You'll also minimize or even avoid hair breakage.

## Mane Presentation-

**Pulling:** "Pulling" means shortening the mane by removing the longest, straggling hairs to create a mane which is of one uniform length (generally 3-5", depending on the size of the horse/pony and the thickness of the neck). A too short mane will stand up straight, a too long mane will be very difficult to braid.

Most horses will not mind this if you pull only a few hairs at once. You may find pulling the mane easier after a workout because the horse's pores are open. To pull a mane, grab a small section of hair at the tips, then comb backward toward the base of the mane. Long hairs will remain in your hand, but most will be pushed up, out of the way. Using a pulling comb, the longest hairs are broken or cut, or you can use a regular comb by wrapping a few of the longest hairs around the comb and tug them out with a quick downward motion, pulling them out by the roots. If they don't come out easily, use smaller sections. Continue down the neck, stepping back occasionally to check your work. While this process doesn't appear to hurt most ponies and horses, some hate having their manes pulled. These horses may benefit from having their manes thinned with a razor comb. If you're using a razor comb, simply back-comb a section and cut the long hairs 2 to 3 inches from the mane's base.

## English Style Plaits

For a long time the most popular style of mane plaiting in Australia was the Australian rosettes, instructions for which are given further down this page. However, over the past few seasons or so, the softer looking 'English' style plaits have become very fashionable. Although for Australian rosettes the mane has to be quite thin, for English plaits the mane is still short (around 10cm long) but thicker. Before you plait, the mane has to be clean and freshly brushed.

### You will need:

- A spray bottle of water
- A mane and tail comb
- Rubber bands that match your horses mane (the ones made for manes are the best)
- Blunt ended needle with a not too small eye
- Plaiting thread the same colour as your horses mane
- Hair spray and gel

One of the great things about English plaits is that you don't do very many! Divide the mane up into approx 9 or 11 (make sure it is an odd number) of even sized bunches, and secure with a rubber band. It is preferable to work from the withers to the poll, (make sure you have clipped a bridle path behind your horses ears of around 7 cm) and do step one to all bunches before then doing step two and three to each plait.

### Step One:

Wet each section thoroughly (add gel if you want) and plait down securely each bunch. The very top should be not quite as tight as the rest. When you reach the end and secure it with a rubber band, with the last twist double over the end of the plait, so that the end of the plait is round, and not bristly with hairs. (see photo). This becomes important later. If you are doing a turnout class you should secure the end with thread. Thread your needle with approximately 20-25cm of thread and poke it through the rubber band three times, so that you end up with the needle hanging down underneath the plait. By poking it through the rubber band you are making the thread much more secure than if you just wrapped it around the end.



### Step Two:

Now that you have the thread hanging beneath the plait, take the needle and poke it through the top of the plait, right at the base of the mane, from **underneath**. This will have the effect of doubling the plait over. Secure this folded over plait together by stitching down the plait, making sure you end up with the needle once again



underneath the plait, hanging out the end. If you haven't folded the end of the plait over earlier, bristly bits will stick out the top - which is \*not\* a good look.

### Step Three:

Take the needle and poke it through the top of the plait as you did before, so you are doubling the plait once again. Secure this by stitching through the plait a number of times. You don't have to tie it off, just cut off the end of the thread if necessary. Spray heaps of hair spray over the plaits to hold them. Do step one the night before (covering them in hair spray, putting on a skinny hood (lycra neck cover) and neck rug), and then step two and three the morning of the show.



## Australian Rosettes

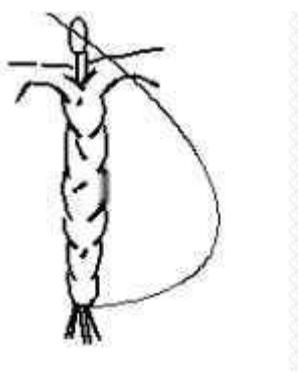
Although Australian rosettes look great if done well, it's easier to achieve neat results with the English plaits.

### You will need:

- Special plaiting thread.
- A spray bottle of water.
- A pull through. A description of one is in the instructions for hunter braids. You can also use a large plastic needle, with a largish eye.
- Rubber bands
- Hair spray.



**Step One:** First you need a well pulled, or at least thinned and short (approx 10-12cm - that's maybe 4 -5 inches I think) mane. Wash it at least 3-4 days (maybe more) before the show so some of the oil has come back into it - otherwise it is too slippery to plait neatly. Divide the mane up into an odd number (that's the tradition - plus the forelock equals an even number). Do around 25 or so braids. Each section of mane should be around 1-1.5 inches long - less if your horse has a really thick mane. When you divide it up hold each section with those special plaiting rubber bands. Taking one section at a time thoroughly wet it with the sprayer bottle. Make sure the roots are really wet so you don't have all those horrible frizzy bits sticking out while you plait. Plait down normally, making sure you do it really tightly. About 3/4 of the way down add about 25cm of thread. To add the yarn you just lay it across two sections of the plait you are in the process of doing and continue plaiting like the thread is part of your horse's mane. When you get to the end tie off the plait tightly with the thread.



### Step Three:

**Step Two:** You stick the pull through straight through the base of the plait. Take the ends of the thread around the end of the plait and loop them through the eye of the pull through. Then 'pull through' the needle so the plait is now laying the other way up against the neck (the same side), with a little 'knob' being formed at the top where the plait was pulled through.

After removing the pull through, hold the little knob against the neck and wrap the plait as tight as you can as close to the neck as you can, around the knob. This forms the 'rosette'. To make the plait as close as possible to the knob, wrap the remaining ends of the thread (there should still be quite a bit) tightly around the plait and when you come to the end of the thread, secure the whole thing with a rubber band. This should be close to the neck and you shouldn't be able to see it at all.

Do the entire neck this way (see graphic below of a finished mane) and spray with heaps of hair spray. Do the forelock like a mini tail plait - just a French braid, rather than a 'rosette'.



## PLAITING THE TAIL & FORELOCK

### Plaiting the Tail

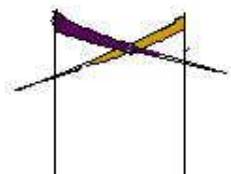
A pulled or plaited tail is required at most types of horse shows. Although not difficult to learn, a plaited tail creates a neat, sharp result. However, it is probably a good idea to have a few practise runs before the actual show, as it does take a little while to figure it out. When preparing for your show, make sure you leave 20-30 minutes for the tail plait, as you may have to unravel it and start again a couple of times due to mistakes - I normally do!

#### You will need:

- A spray bottle of water
- A mane and tail comb
- A rubber band or needle and thread
- Hair spray and/or hair gel

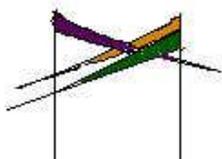
First off, if you plan to plait your horse's tail, make sure you let the hairs around the top of his tail grow long. When you wash your horse before a show, don't condition the top of the tail, as this will make it too slippery to plait neatly.

Once you have your horse's tail clean, comb through the top of the tail so it is untangled. Spray the top of the tail with lots of water. If you plait the tail when the hair is dry, you will probably get more wispy bits. I don't put any gel or hair spray on until I've finished the plait, as I find this makes plaiting very difficult, especially the top bit.



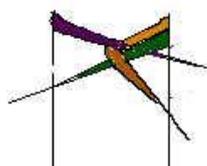
#### Step One:

Take a small amount of hair, from the very top of the side of the dock, on either side. For the purposes of this explanation, I'm going to lay the left (purple) strands over the right (yellow) strands, but you could do it the other way if you want. The smaller the bunches of hair you use, the nicer the plait looks, in general. A bunch around 7-10mm wide is what I normally use.



#### Step Two:

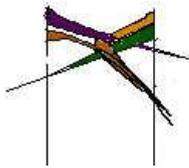
Now take a bunch of hair from the right side (green) and lay it over the bunch from the left (purple). You now have the three strands of the plait that you will add too as you continue down the dock.



#### Step Three:

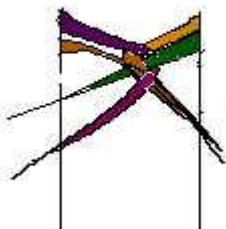
Take the 'yellow' strand, and lay it over the green strand. In this diagram, the plait is a bit to the

right, make sure your's is centred!



#### Step Four

Now take a bunch of hair around the same size as the other bunches, from the left side of the tail, and add it into the yellow bunch, by simply laying it on top. Make sure you're holding all bunches firmly while plaiting, but it is important that you are holding everything firm from now on.

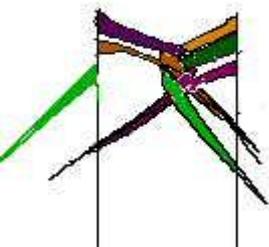


#### Step Five

Now take the purple bunch and lay it over the newly added too yellow bunch.

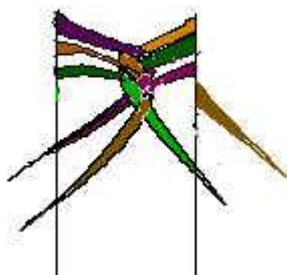
#### Step Six

Take another small bunch from the right hand side and lie it over the purple bunch.



#### Step Seven

Hopefully you've seen the pattern by now. The next step is to lay the green bunch over the purple bunch, and then add in new strands from the left side of the tail to the green bunch.



#### Step Eight

This step is really the same as the step above - lay the yellow bunch over the green bunch, then add to the yellow bunch.

To complete the tail, continue to plait down, adding in strands from either side, until you have plaited down far enough to suit your horse (To finish off the tail, there are a number of methods. You can either normally plait down (not adding in extra bunches) until you reach the end of the long strands you are left with when you have finished the braid, and then secure with a rubber band and leave it hanging amongst the tail. A neater result is to then carefully push the long plait up inside the braid, or doubling it over and stitching together. You could also plait down hardly at all, and just secure the end of the plait with a rubber band and leave the long end bits free to blend in with the tail. To keep the plait neat, generously spray it with hairspray, and use gel to stick down any stray hairs.

**Forelocks:** Use the same method as for plaiting a tail, but push the end of the plait up into the braid so it is neat.

## **HOW TO APPLY MAKEUP TO HORSES FOR SHOWS**

Makeup is used to enhance a horse's natural features or disguise scars and scrapes, or uneven markings. Most breed associations allow the use of makeup as long as it is not obvious. There are however, a few classes that prohibit the use of makeup or artificial enhancement. It takes a while to become adept at applying makeup to horses.

Applying makeup to horses for shows is no different from applying makeup to yourself. The products are different, but the purpose is the same--accent the positive and minimize the negative. You want to draw attention to the points of the horse that look most attractive, while minimizing any problems that the horse may have, whether they are conformation faults or scars. It is important to practice applying makeup to your horse at home before the show so that you are comfortable doing so and you know what looks best.

Be sure to practice (a lot) several months prior to starting your show season. You may have to mix colours to get the right shade for your horse. Opt for a lighter colour rather than darker as the lighter colour reflects as a highlight when you apply your last minute shining spray. And just like with people, remember less is more. You are showcasing your horse, his beauty and athletic ability not your prowess with makeup.

Experiment with different products and colours until you have the ones that best match your horse's colour. Do this several months before you intend to show as some products may stain or dye your horse's coat. You may have to mix colours to get your horse's exact shade.

Clip, bathe and groom your horse as usual in anticipation of the show. Groom your horse thoroughly before applying horse makeup.

Start with a clean horse. No matter how neatly you apply your horse's makeup, if you are applying it over dirty hair, it will not look good. Wash your horse thoroughly with a mild shampoo and allow it to dry. Do not apply any sprays yet, as they can leave a residue behind that will interfere with the other products you apply.

Cover scabs the morning of the horse show with a thick (1/2- to 1 inch) layer of petroleum jelly. Leave it on for 30 minutes. Gently remove the petroleum jelly and test the scab. If it comes up easily you are ready for the next step. If the scab doesn't come up, apply another coat of petroleum jelly and wait for another 30 minutes before removing it.

Use disposable gloves when applying makeup as some products will stain.

Makeup is generally applied around your horse's eyes, nose and ears. Be sure to get inside the nostrils and ears as well. This will darken the skin and help the horse look more alert.

Apply makeup to a clean cloth, or sponge. Wipe it over the area on your horse you wish to enhance or disguise (scars and scabs). Apply a thin coat working the cloth against the horse's coat to get the colour to the skin and completely cover the hair follicle. It may take several applications before you have the correct coverage.

Run a clean cloth lightly over the areas you applied makeup to to remove any excess. Use a blotting motion rather than a circular scrubbing motion.

Remove makeup that has run or spread beyond the area you want it with a barely moist (wring out as much water as you can) small sponge or cotton ball.

Enhance white socks with Champion Tails White cover Creme (the kind made for horses not the kind used on chalkboards). Dampen the existing white markings with water using a small sponge.

Wipe the hooves clean and apply hoof blacking or polish now. Polish hooves with hoof paint. For horses with black hooves, black polish looks very sharp. Horses with striped or white hooves may look better with clear polish or they may look better with black, and some breed and show organizations prefer one to the other. Regardless of the colour that you choose, careful application is the key to a nice appearance. Place your horse's hoof on a piece of wood or towel so that dust will not settle into the wet polish. Apply at the hairline and move uniformly around the hoof until the entire surface is covered. Let one hoof dry before moving onto the next to reduce the likelihood that your horse will move the wet hoof before the polish dries.

Make or cover up white markings using white, black or other colour creams or gels. Spread a thin layer of the appropriate colour onto the bristles of a toothbrush. Form or cover the spot by applying the creams or gel against the horse's hair. This works the colour into the skin and covers the underside of the hair follicle. It may take several applications to get the coverage you need.

Use the toothbrush to brush the coat in the right direction. Apply another layer of colour to the now flatten coat.

Use a makeup to enhance the muzzle, around the eyes and inside the ears of your horse. Apply to a cotton ball or cotton square and gently wipe onto the horse. Use a clean cloth to blot up excess oil or highlighter.

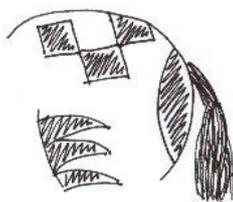
Remove makeup with warm water and a sponge.

Finish with a coat polish. If you are only showing in halter or showmanship classes, spray him all over. If you are showing in riding classes, avoid the saddle areas, because coat spray can make the coat slick.

\*\*Use only cosmetics designed for horses, baby oil has in the past been a popular product for using as makeup however this can burn the horses face. I always shampoo my horses clean after an event to remove all of the sprays and products put on their skin.

## **QUARTER MARKS**

Quarter Marks are used to disguise a bad rump or enhance a good rump. There is an art to creating the ideal quarter marks but this is just to give you a basis of the different types of standard quarter marks you can do. There are also template patterns available: i.e. with small squares, diamonds, or triangle. At this moment and show season in Australia, the larger squares are in fashion. These can also make a small rump look bigger, and a pointy rump look flatter.



In the picture above, is the check pattern of large squares; what is called an 'apple-bum' (which is the bit closest to the tail); and 'sharks teeth')

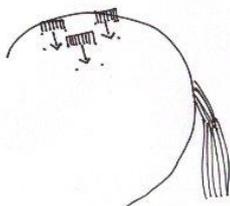
### **What will the Quarter Marker do to enhance the rump?**

Check Pattern: (with squares, diamonds, and triangles)

This pattern is probably the most commonly used one. These are the ones mainly in charge of disguising or enhancing the rump. Larger squares will make a small rump look bigger (because of the bigger squares spread out more), and a pointy rump look flatter, because of the spread out effect. If angled in a certain way, these can make a flat rump look rounder. These types of quarter marks can also draw attention to a good rump, enhancing the look. Though these can enhance and disguise a rump, the effect is limited so don't count on an awful looking rump being disguised totally.

### **Method of how to do a check pattern (large squares) with a piece of fine tooth comb:**

- 1) Firstly brush the hair in the natural direction of growth with a body brush. It will help if you spray some water or some 'show sheen' before you brush.
  - 2) Once the hair is all straight, start on the top left hand corner of the rump (it's up to you how low or high you make them in proportion to the rump).
  - 3) Line the comb up, teeth down, and comb downwards towards you until you make a square.
  - 4) Leave a comb space, and in line with the first square, repeat step 3
  - 5) Now go down to where you left the combs gap, and line the comb up, drawing another square below the two squares. Depending on you horse's rump, you may do more on the top row.
- Either way, work it down so you have the most at the top, and least at the bottom. Like an upside down pyramid.



Squares etc. are also done using templates. These are pretty self explanatory. All you do is hold the template down and brush towards you in a downwards direction. It always helps to have someone hold it down in place.

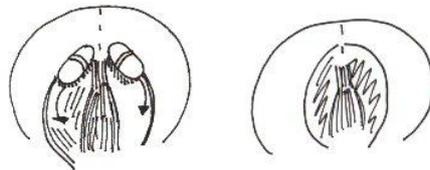
### **Apple Bum**

This is a pattern that is shaped around the tail bit. It is really two half circles around each 'buttock'. These can make a not so wide rump look wider but mainly it's just a finishing touch to your quarter marks and looks good.

### **Method of how to draw an apple bum**

- 1) Brush the hair in its natural direction using a body brush. As I said before, it helps if you spray water or show sheen before you brush
- 2) Start at the top of the tail and bring the brush around in a semi circle till you reach the bottom of the 'buttock'. You might like to brush it a few times to emphasize it and get the desired effect.
- 3) Repeat the same on the other side.

Here is a picture of how to do an 'apple bum':



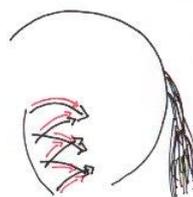
### **'Sharks Teeth':**

These look exactly what their name describes them as. They serve no particular purpose in enhancing or disguising the rump but again, complete the picture. These are probably the hardest pattern to look right, but as the saying goes, practice makes perfect. This is the easiest way to describe their position: imagine a leg of ham... the sharks teeth would be drawn on the left hand side of the meatiest bit!

### **Method of how to draw sharks teeth:**

- 1) Start a few centimetres down from the top of the leg crack.
- 2) Place the body brush on a 45 degree angle to the top and draw an arc away from you.
- 3) Move down a few centimetres and draw an arc to join the end of the last arc.
- 4) Now, starting in exactly the same spot as before, place the body brush on an approx 30 degree angle to the bottom and do another arc.
- 5) Repeat step 2) and 3) and 4) over again until you think you've done enough.

The diagram below will hopefully help you. The arrows are where you are meant to brush...roughly



### **Quarter Mark tips:**

- Make sure your horse is not malting or remove all malting hair before you do these. Little detached hairs stuck to quarter marks looks awful.
- Spray the whole rump or just the brush with water or 'show sheen' before you do the do the quarter marks

- Always make sure the quarter marks are the same on both sides. One starting at the top on one side and one starting in the middle on the other side won't look good.
- Never use the small template check pattern on a small or REALLY skinny rump. Trust me, it looks awful.
- Even if you aren't really able to see the quarter marks, do them anyway because in some lights you can see it and looks great.
- After you finish the quarter marks, spray hair spray on it to keep the hair in place and add shine.
- Don't place rugs on your freshly done quarter marks
- Redo them halfway through the day

The best fine-tooth comb to use is the combs especially for looking for lice in human hair. They're the PERFECT size and perfect tooth space.

### **WARNINGS**

Remember most judges work at numerous shows throughout the year; if you act rude towards one, they may be judging you again and think of that. Also, don't smart off towards one—they have the right to disqualify you for anything you do. Keep in mind that judges collaborate, meaning that if one judge finds you irritating, chances are they'll tell another judge. Avoid these circumstances by keeping a bright smile (teeth are a must!), calm riding, and a safe horse.

Do not apply Show Sheen on the mane or tail before braiding, it is too hard to braid as the mane becomes slippery.

During the off season, keep your horses tail in a tail bag and put coco butter on it every week, this causes the tail to become rich and thick and when the show season comes along brush the tail before the show, you will have the best braiding tail and the thickest tail at the show!

Do not apply any shine-enhancing spray to areas where the saddle goes. It will cause the saddle to slip a lot.

Do not apply coat shine products to the wither end of the mane. This can make your reins slippery whilst riding which makes it very difficult to hold onto them, especially if jumping.

Do not tie your horse up by the bridle. If the horse pulls back you'll end up with a broken bridle and possibly a horse with a broken jaw. Use a webbing halter over the bridle to tie up when getting changed for classes etc.

Don't get too close to other horses in the arena as they can injure you or your horse by kicking. Horses wearing a red ribbon on their tail indicates that they may kick.

Horses can get spooked easily at shows. so if it is your first time or your horse isn't quite adjusted to the show grounds, they may pull back at your trailer, so keep your eyes on them!

If you have to band your horse's mane or tail, never use conditioner, or show sheen, in the mane, as the bands will easily fall off, and you will find it near impossible to plait!

Show Sheen actually dries out the hairs, so it is best to not apply them to the mane or tail, as it could cause the hairs to become brittle and break easily. A good conditioning treatment will restore condition after Show Sheen.

## **OVERVIEW**

There are many simple things you can do to improve the show preparation and skill levels you currently have. And this will improve the show results you are getting with your horse. The most important and easiest is to - practice at home.

- Practice, Practice, Practice. This is applicable to every area of your show preparation. Makeup, braiding, banding, clipping, etc.
- Re-read your breed standards or club rules. What are you not allowed to do to show off your horse? Some breed societies and horse clubs have an extensive list of things you can't do, others have none. For example: some don't allow the use of hair dye but have no stipulations against colour enhancing sprays.
- Brush your horse daily. Make the time to brush your horse from head to toe. Brushing is a great way to increase your horses' natural shine, while helping keep his coat clean. We all get busy, and it's easy to fall into the habit of irregularly giving your horse a good brush. Daily brushing should be part of the regular grooming routine of every show horse. It also helps you notice bumps and abnormalities quickly so you can attend to any veterinary issues nearly as soon as they happen.
- Does your horse protest when you razor it's muzzle? Try dampening the muzzle and using a small amount of shaving cream (for sensitive skin). It reduces the drag on the blades. Less pulling = less pain = happier horse.
- Always double check the horse grooming supplies in your tack box. This applies no matter what type of showing you do. Whether you use your horse for Showjumping, Dressage, Performance, Pony Club, Halter classes only, or anything else. Your tack box is an important tool. Keep it stocked well with your favourite horse grooming supplies. They're the tools you need to do your show prep, look after them. Finding yourself short of any of your grooming supplies can dramatically affect the results you get when preparing your horse for a show. Not only is your horse not looking his best for the show, you get stressed and this transfers itself to your horse. If you're serious about improving the results your horse is getting – start treating your tack box, (and the grooming supplies it contains), like the important tools they are.
- Practice applying horse makeup – do this at home so that when you get to a horse show you know the result you want and you can achieve it quickly.
- Do you enter your show horse in led classes? Put your show bridle/halter on your horse, take him to a suitable area and practice a show workout or any variation of the workout you did at your last horse show. Practice making him stand up as you would be required to in your class. The more you do this the better your horse will perform at shows. Five minutes a day can make a big difference to your horses' performance.
- Do you show your horse in ridden classes? Practice more during the week. If you already ride twice during the week, ride three times. If you can't increase the number of times you ride during the week, can you increase the length of time you ride for? An extra fifteen minutes a day can make a big difference to the performance of both you and your horse.

It doesn't matter what type of horse you show, (Show Horse, Clydesdale, Quarter Horse, Miniature etc), or at what level you compete. Practice is as important in preparing a Pony Club horse as it is in preparing a Grand Prix dressage horse. Basically, improving your results comes down to one thing - practice. practice, practice and more practice will give both you and your horse a more polished performance at your next horse show.

The more you practice your show prep, the quicker and better you get at it. The more you practice your riding, the better you get at it. The more you practice standing your horse up as you would in his halter class, the better you both get at it. Pick one area you want to improve and focus on it until you see a marked improvement, then move onto the next area you want to improve.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE CLASSES**

### **Best Presented**

In the interest of time management, workouts are not required in this class. The winner should be the horse and handler with the best overall appearance.

The Show Horse should be presented in a neat and tidy manner. Horses should be in good condition, clean, well groomed, with trimmed bridle-path, face and ears, and fetlocks/legs. Hooves should be blacked (a clear polish may be used on white hooves), and any white markings spotless. Make-up may be used sparingly. False tails are discouraged. Quarter marks are permitted. Manes and tails can be presented as follows:

- a) Both mane and tail unplaited.
- b) English plaits or rosettes for the mane, if mane is plaited, tail must be braided, pulled or shaved.

### **Led Classes**

It is expected that the judge will consider conformation, workout (movement), presentation and obedience of each horse.

The Show Horse should be of good athletic type with a robust build. They should have strong, straight legs, a long sloping shoulder, a croup that may be as high as the wither, and broad, sloping hindquarters. The Show Horse should stand over a good amount of ground, and therefore tend to have some extra length to the back. They should also have a long underline, strong neck, and wide brow. Bumps, injuries or scars may also be evident with horses that have raced and should not be discriminated against. As long as it is not a conformation or breeding fault, it should not go against them.

The trot should be well balanced, with strong movement from the shoulder required for pulling a race sulky, and no visible evidence of forging or knee-knocking, as these are detrimental to the horse at racing speed. A strong, even length of stride with no wasted action, in front and behind, no paddle or extravagant knee lift, is preferred.

In judging the led Show Horse it is not uncommon to see horses pacing. Ideally we would have all horses trot in their led class but this may not be possible for horses that are currently racing or recently retired and therefore, horses should not be penalised for pacing. In led classes, the judge is asked to consider the confirmation and movement of the horse whether it be at the trot or pace. For led Classes, smart casual attire is acceptable, including hat, vest or jacket, gloves and whip. Standard rider attire is acceptable (please refer to the EFA guidelines and/or requirements specified by the specific show committee for attire expected of Junior and Senior Handlers).

### **Ridden Classes**

The ridden Show Horse should be judged as any hack presenting for a ridden class. We expect the judge to inform each rider of the required workout and to judge them on the correctness, and smoothness of completion of the workout. Horses in walk/trot classes are not required to canter. Ideally we would have no horses pacing in ridden classes, but a few strides of pacing would not be considered a major fault in a workout that is well ridden overall. However, quite a lot of pacing would be considered detrimental to a workout and should be judged accordingly.

Rider attire – at all times, clothing should be neat, tidy and appropriate for handling horses. For ridden classes, standard rider attire is acceptable - (please refer to the EFA guidelines and/or requirements specified by the specific show committee for attire expected of Junior and Senior Riders).

### **Ridden Hack Experience Classes**

**Maiden/Beginner:** Horses in Maiden or Beginner Ridden Classes are not required to canter. A horse that paces in beginner class should not be penalised for pacing during a workout. Maiden Horse has had no wins under saddle. No double bridles allowed in this class.

**Newcomer:** These classes have differing rules from state to state but generally a Newcomer Hack is a ridden class open to horses that are in their first year of showing, it is expected that the horse will be in a snaffle bit, Hanoverian noseband is optional, the judge will generally ask for a similar workout to the maiden hack class but may add an additional change of lead at the canter and some lengthened trot.

**Novice:** Horses in Novice Ridden Classes should be able to perform basic manoeuvres in walk, trot and canter, with adequate time for progressive transitions. Allowances can be made for a few pace strides occurring in the workout. The Novice is not expected to be fully educated, but should be able to complete a basic workout in a reasonable manner. Novice Horse has had less than 4 wins under saddle and has not won a champion ridden award where there are more than two horses in the class.

**Open:** Horses in Open Ridden Classes are expected to demonstrate their ability at walk, trot and canter and are expected not to pace. More advanced movements, for example, serpentines, simple changes, lengthened strides, rein back, may be requested as part of a workout. Open Horse has had 4 or more wins and/or has won a champion ridden award where there is more than two horses in the class. (Any horse that has ceased to be eligible for maiden or novice ridden classes.)

**Best Educated** - This class is to determine the best-educated Show Horse under saddle. This is a free choice workout and we advise judges to look for the following to the Best-Educated workout: walk to canter – lengthen of trot (show some) – rein back – hand gallop. Workouts are to be required of horses called in.

**Pleasure**—Horses are to be judged on performance, apparent ability to give a good pleasurable ride, and manners according to the breed being shown. All exhibitors will enter the ring at a posting trot or intermediate gait in a counter-clockwise direction. They shall then go at least once around the ring at each of the three gaits: walk, trot and canter. They will then be asked to reverse and repeat the procedure. The judge may ask for an extended gait. At the extended gait, the judge may ask for the halt and for horses to stand quietly on a free rein. Horses may be required to back.

**Show Hunter Hack** - A "show hunter" is a hunter horse which is shown only on the flat - either in hand or under saddle. A show hunter horse is not required to demonstrate an ability to jump, however, he should nonetheless prove himself to be a versatile horse, which is well conformed and has the ability to carry weight for extended periods of time on the hunt field. Show hunters are judged on type, manners and style. Whilst an attractive horse is desirable, a plain horse which is of true hunter type should always win over a horse of obvious hack type. Both riders and horses should be neatly turned out to a standard which would be expected in any show ring, however, equipment must be workmanlike. For example, ribboned browbands, lapel pins, white girths and/or excessive make up are not acceptable in the hunter ring.

**WORKING Hunter Hack**—Horses are to be shown at a walk, trot, canter, and may be asked to extend the trot, both ways of the ring. All equines being considered for an award will be required to jump two fences not more than 2 feet high. The equine should be smooth, relaxed, obedient

and willing. The style of jumping should be smooth and consistent, such that the equine could be relied on to take the rider over fences in a safe, obedient manner at an even hunting pace. Emphasis will be placed on the equine's performance and the suitability to the rider for this style of riding. To be judged 30% on performance on the flat and 70% on performance over fences.

**Rider Classes**-A riding competition or rider class is a competition between riders to determine the most correct rider position and aids in an efficient and elegant manner.

**Turnout/Smartest on Parade** - This competition determines the most appealing horse and rider combination. It is judged on suitability of mount, general presentation of horse and rider and overall appeal and elegance. All competitors are required to line up and are closely inspected for Preparation of horse, saddlery and riders attire. No individual workout is required. (please refer to the EFA guidelines &/or requirements specified by the specific show committee for attire expected of Riders).

**Harness Classes** - In Harness classes, the horse, vehicle and harness are to be judged. The judge should take into account the overall look, condition and safety of the horse and the gear, relative to the class being contested.

- a) Racing harness – horses and drivers should be in correct race outfit, harness gear and sulky.
- b) Pleasure or Open Harness – the presentation of the horse and the completeness and presentation of the vehicle should be taken into account. The attire of the driver (and groom if present) and the harness should be relevant to the type of vehicle exhibited. The judges are asked to consider all harness types and the best presented of both types. The workout will be prepared by the judge.

## **THE JUDGES**

Judges... the word makes some shiver. Though without them, what kind of competition would there be? Judges are necessary to keep a high standard and to choose those who meet the criteria of a winner. You'll often hear the statement ..."so and so was so unfair, I should've won" but for some reason this horse did NOT win, and rule books stipulate that the judges decision is final. This is where it is important to consider the fact that you can't win them all. Unlike dressage where there is pretty much set criteria for judging, showing is often based on preference. For example, a finer thoroughbred type who usually wins all his classes is in a ring with a stockier type hack, who doesn't necessarily win his classes, and the stockier hack wins the class while the thoroughbred is not even called in. This judge obviously preferred stockier types.

You will come across judges who like particular things. For example, a judge might call in a line-up of horses that have particularly straight movement- but are not necessarily good-lookers, or the judge might call in a line-up of horses that is based particularly on the suppleness/mannerism of the horses, or the judge may call in a line-up of good-lookers...etc.

### **Here are some tips to help you cope and get on the judges good side:**

- Smile every time the judge looks at you in the line-up
- Smile when you enter the ring (this is the first sign that you are relaxed and happy)
- Say thank you or please etc. every time you ask or receive something
- Say sorry if your horse barges the judge over (hehe!)
- Give the judge an apologetic smile if your workout went bad
- If the judge pays you a compliment say thank you
- Give your horse a pat after your workout, even if it went bad. This shows real horsemanship. (on the other hand, Did you know: if you are in America, do not pat your horse in the ring- it may lead to disqualification)
- Congratulate the other riders (even when you don't get anything)

- Avoid constantly looking at the judge on the circle, just concentrate on your riding
- Don't question the judge
- Don't be smart and say "hold on a sec" while you fix your horse up
- Gent Riders take off your helmet and put it under your left arm when approached by the judge. This is provided your horse is well behaved, if not simply acknowledge the judge by nodding your head
- AND BE POLITE (which actually sums up half of all above)

At the end of the day or perhaps during a break between classes, go and talk to the judge and ask them (more so if you were placed lower) what you could do to improve you and your horse- you will be given some first hand experienced advice.

Best not to hold grudges against judges, it's likely you will see them again.

## **SHOW RING ETIQUETTE**

Showing horses can be a lot of fun, but it's most fun when everyone follows good horse show etiquette. Poor sportsmanship detracts from the experience for everyone, it is much more pleasant to show your horse when no one is cutting you off or crowding you, and when they are friendly and helpful. Ring Etiquette is about common courtesy, manners and safety.

Many people get caught up in competition and focus on winning ribbons, forgetting about the fun and camaraderie aspect of the sport. They ignore the needs of people around them and can cause problems in the show ring. By following a few simple rules of horse show etiquette, you can avoid alienating your fellow competitors and everyone will get more enjoyment out of the showing experience.

This information has been put together to form a standard to which everyone is encouraged to follow. You will see these standards being followed when riding in a ring/group situation anywhere.

1. Follow the rules of the show and the show grounds. Only bathe your horse in designated areas, don't litter, and park in designated areas. Be courteous to others. If you see someone needs assistance, offer to help! They may do the same for you one day. Don't block the gates to the arena. If you are waiting for your class, make sure that you are not in the way of horses who need to enter or exit the arena.

2. Be aware of your surroundings in the warm-up arena. General etiquette says that when you pass someone going the opposite direction, you should pass with your horse's left shoulder to the other horse's left shoulder. However, this does not always happen, especially in a crowded warm-up, so just try not to cause any crashes. If the majority of riders are going in one direction, you should try to go with them. Don't stop to chat, rest, or fix something while in the warm-up area, go to the centre or outside of the warm-up area.

3. In the show arena, remember that you don't have to make your transitions as soon as they are called. Take a few seconds to get your horse ready, then let the riders in front of you make their up transitions first so that you don't run into them, or wait until riders behind you have made down transitions or are not too close to you so that they don't run into you.

4. Make sure you have as much space around you as possible at all times. This will not only make sure that the judge sees you, but if you or another rider has a problem, there won't be a crash. Your horse will also be happier if he is not crowded. Maintain a significant distance from other horses in multi-rider classes. This might mean making a circle in the arena or passing another horse, but it will save you from a collision or a nasty conflict. When coming up behind a horse that

is traveling at a slower rate than yourself, you need to pass or circle. It is important to make this decision while you still have a minimum of 2 horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you. This will prevent the potential situation of kicking by either horse. Provide a wide berth to other horses when passing during a multi-rider class. Generally, a two-horse-length space is sufficient to avoid disaster, but keep an especially far distance between yourself and a horse with his ears pinned back. If all the horses in the ring have clustered into a group you might decide to do a circle and utilize the empty space behind your horse. Before moving off of the rail, take note of where the judge is and plan your circle. Move off of the rail and begin your circle while you still have at least 2 horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you. Once your circle is completed you will arrive back on the rail with plenty of room for your horse. There maybe classes where there are a large number of horses in the ring at once and finding space is difficult. In that situation you will have to do your best to not crowd the horse in front of you by carefully controlling the speed of your horse until an opportunity presents itself for you to pass, circle, or move across the ring. If you need to pass someone, pass on the inside. When you pass on the inside, make sure you are well past them before moving over to the rail-do not cut them off. If you cause their horse to break, they may not place as well as they should and that is not good sportsmanship.

5. Avoid riding between other riders and the judge in a multi-horse class. This is called "shielding," and is an underhanded tactic used by overly competitive riders. In many horse shows, riders are banned for this practice, and it is considered very poor taste.

6. Congratulate other riders on their victories, even if you didn't place in the class. Humility is a virtue in the riding arena, and horse show etiquette requires that you be happy for other winners.

### **SHOW RING PROCEDURES & ETIQUETTE – LED CLASSES**

This section addresses the way a led class is conducted at a typical Ag show. Our Club shows will likely be very similar but, in all cases, it is up to the exhibitor to follow the judges directions.

There is no set order of go in a class. All exhibitors wait in line for their class to be called into the ring and will enter one at a time. Generally, all competitors will receive the same workout to complete with their horse. When it is your turn to demonstrate your workout, confirm that you understand the instructions of the judge if you are not sure of what to do. Don't just copy what the previous person did and assume that they have followed the judges instructions correctly.

Enter the ring at a walk, and line your horse up with the judge. It is very important that you and your horse walk a straight line. Walk confidently and quickly enough that your horse is exhibiting a "working walk", and not just strolling along. If the horse trots, simply bring him back to the walk and carry on. When you reach the position the judge has asked to trot, trot on past in a straight line. The judge will be watching your horse trot away and in profile. Your horse should trot freely without a very firm hold on the lead shank or without being dragged, and at a speed fast enough to show off his best movement. Your horse should be alert and focusing on you only. Of course, this can be difficult sometimes with a stallion or a young horse, but this is where your hours and hours of training at home will come into play. Your horse should always step right out when asked to move forward, without getting ahead of you or lagging behind. He should set up in as little time as possible and keep his attention on you at all times. Ensure you stop your horse where instructed to, and make your horse stand square and alert until the judge gives you the nod to return to the line up.

If the horses are lined up head to tail, ensure that you have enough room between yourself and the exhibitors in front of and behind you for safety and to allow you to show your horse to its best advantage. If they are instructed to line up side by side, ensure you allow sufficient space between horses. As soon as you enter the line up, set your horse up and show it. The judge may still be watching other horses enter the ring, but could also be glancing over at yours at any time.

Your horse should always be standing quietly but alertly, and as correctly as possible, for the duration of the class. When all the horses have finished their workouts and lined up, the judge will then look at each one individually. When he or she is looking at your horse, this is the time to really show! This is your moment to shine and to show your horse the very best you can. As the judge moves on to the next horse, you can relax slightly, but still keep in mind that he or she may be looking at your horse at any time and perhaps comparing it with another.

Unless the class is told by the judge to relax when he or she is finished judging, continue to remain sharp and alert. Avoid chatting with other exhibitors at any time during the class, and focus totally on your horse and the judge. When the placings are called, quickly move forward to pick up your ribbon. It's not up to the judge or the ring steward to come to you.

In classes that are qualifiers for a championship class, the top two placings will usually return for the pinning of the championship. The first two placings will generally come back into the ring, and two horses will be selected for Champion and Reserve Champion. If the show offers a Supreme Led Horse, or Champion of Champions class, then only the Champions will enter the ring for the judge to select the best horse in the show.

In a led class, the judge is rating only the horses, not the handlers. However, you and your horse should be a team that is eye catching & as well turned out as possible. As the handler, your clothes should fit well, be neat & clean, and of a colour that will either contrast or complement that of your horse. Long sleeves are not mandatory, but do look the most professional. The western look is quite outdated now (but still perfectly acceptable), and most ladies wear something like black pants with a blouse and vest, or a jacket. Gentlemen will wear either a shirt and tie with a vest, or shirt and tie with a sport coat generally. Hats & gloves are optional but they can certainly add the finishing touch to a nice outfit. It is acceptable to wear your riding attire, including boots & helmet if you will be participating in a ridden class immediately after the led class is completed.

Your own body language is more important than you might realize. Your horse will certainly pick up on your feelings and will respond accordingly. If you're very tense and nervous, he may feel that there's something to be afraid of, and will become nervous and jittery himself. If you project the feelings and the image that you know your horse is the best one out there, not only will that be reflected in your horse, but it will also catch the attention of the judge. A gorgeous horse, impeccably groomed and turned out, with a handler that exudes confidence and professionalism, is sure to be a winning combination!

## **HALTING SQUARE**

### **Step1**

Place the halter and lead on your horse. The halter will allow you to control the horse and will give her some guidance during your training session.

### **Step2**

Train your horse in a level, enclosed pen. Working in a smaller area makes it more difficult for your horse to escape should anything go wrong.

### **Step3**

Stand on the left side of your horse and walk a few steps forward. Give your horse the command to stop, and turn slightly to face her. This will give her the signal that she needs to stop walking and stand still.

### **Step4**

Choose a command that you will use while training the horse to stand square. It can be something simple such as "square," but you will need to use the same command every time. The horse will associate that particular word with Standing Square as long as you use it consistently.

### **Step5**

Look at your horse's feet. Some horses tend to stand naturally square while others will need to be adjusted to get the proper stance. If your horse is square when you stop, praise him and give him a small treat. If he is not square, you will need to adjust his feet.

### **Step6**

Adjust your horse's stance according to how his feet are placed. If one foot is further forward than the other three, step towards him and ask him to back up slightly. If one foot is father back, tug slightly on the lead rope to get him to take a step forward.

### **Step7**

Reward your horse when he is standing relatively square. Do not expect your horse to stand perfectly square during the first training session, as it takes time to develop a proper stance.

### **Step8**

Walk your horse forward a few steps and again give him the command to stop and square. Repeat the adjustment process and reward her once she is standing correctly.

### **Step9**

Repeat this walking and stopping for approximately 15 minutes to give your horse a proper training session. Horses have a very short attention span, but if you consistently work in short, frequent training sessions, your horse will know how to stand square for any competition.

## **20 BLUE RIBBON TIPS FOR SHOWING YOUR HORSE**

1. If you haven't already, attend a show and watch the classes you plan on entering so that you know exactly what to expect. Ear plugs can be of assistance for horses that are sensitive to noise.
2. If your horse is green, take him to a show and don't enter any classes; just evaluate how he handles the new surroundings.
3. Make a list of everything you need to take to the show; then pack the day beforehand, checking each item off your list.
4. Have a friend or family member on hand at the show to help with last minute grooming, giving your boots a wipe before you enter the ring or just providing moral support.
5. Before each class, visualize how you want your ride to be—professionals find this technique helpful.
6. If you don't have a lot of money to spend on show clothes, stick to classic colours.

7. Dress up your everyday tack by using a special pad or blanket reserved only for show.
8. Teach your horse to trailer load confidently, well before an event. Show morning is no time to discover that your horse hates straight loads or won't travel alone.
9. If your discipline calls for show-day braiding or banding, start practicing well ahead of time, or hire an expert to do the job for you.
10. Bathe your horse for the show, and then cover him up for the night with a rug; add a stretchy hood if you've braided or banded. If he has white stockings, protect his legs in standing wraps, too.
11. School one level higher than you show. That way you can compete with confidence, even when nerves and distractions might get in the way.
12. Give yourself—and your horse—plenty of time before your classes start to get accustomed to the showgrounds.
13. Know how your horse behaves in the company of others. If he is unruly, it's probably not time to show yet.
14. Warm your horse up, but don't burn him out. Save his best energy for the actual class.
15. Don't school your horse in gadgets and then expect him to perform in the show-ring without them.
16. Clean your tack the day before the show: Make sure it's in tip-top shape, and polish any silver.
17. Know what the show-ring turnout requirements are, and make sure you comply. Poor turnout shows lack of respect to the judge.
18. If your horse is having a meltdown in a ridden class, head to the centre of the ring and just stand quietly. Better to chalk it up to experience than create a dangerous situation.
19. Some disciplines have strict rules and regulations about equipment. Study your rulebook closely to be sure that your tack is "legal."
20. Your day isn't done just because your classes are over. Attend to your horse's needs before relaxing with friends.