

Hunter Ponies and Galloways

A true hunter pony or galloway needs to have quality, speed, courage and intelligence. He should be kind, free moving and substantial whilst being underpinned with appropriate bone. He needs to be small and strong enough to carry up to 14 stone, be nimble, docile and have tremendous staying power.

The petite, finely boned, exquisite show pony specimen is not the animal you would choose to take your child or yourself hunting over ploughed fields.

Whilst we understand some finely boned ponies could and often do, carry up to 14 stone, its narrow, lightweight frame would make the ride an uncomfortable experience as opposed to the armchair comfort offered by a more substantial, well boned animal. His head should be handsome as opposed to “pretty” but he must never be coarse. To be truly successful, he must have the quality and presence to set him above the crowd.

The fundamental characteristics of hardiness, strength, honesty and true pony quality must be retained. It has never been more important for a hunter pony or Galloway, to actually look like one, being of a broader, more workmanlike appearance than his sleek, exquisite aforementioned counterparts! The hunter pony/galloway is a type, rather than a breed. He may be a blend of varying breeds with anything from native English pony, Riding Pony, Australian Pony, Arabian and/or thoroughbred blood being part of the mix. There should be a highly transparent difference between the pony hack and pony hunter type. Currently the line is very blurred due to some competitors determining, on the day, in which ring they have a better chance of success rather than the ring where their animal **SHOULD** be competing.

Failed, grossly overweight animals, underpinned on fine petite bone are entirely inappropriate and something, an experienced judge should be able to decipher and not reward. There is nothing worse than seeing and hearing a huffing, puffing obese pony fattened up in an attempt to “make him a hunter” struggling to catch its breath after attempting to gallop. In my eyes this is a sure fire way to not only founder or break an animal down, but equates to cruelty. An animal which also may be well loved, but is in no way, shape or form a show animal, is also not a hunter.

His paces should be straight, sound and correct. He should not display the extravagant, daisy cutting movement of the show pony but his paces should be long, level, smooth and free, without choppiness. Flashiness is not required! He should have a swinging, active walk, a long striding, regular trot, a comfortable, balanced canter and a naturally, long, low gallop.

Any horse should be a pleasure to ride and the hunter pony or Galloway should display exceptional manners and display the attributes of an animal which may be trusted implicitly to carry a child safely or small adult to enjoy either on the hunt field or show ring or for general pleasure.

Showing in any shape or form, unless you are a breeder or professional rider, should be entered into for fun and enjoyment.

An obvious statement perhaps, but very easy for one to lose sight of.

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