

JUDGES AND COMPETITORS GUIDE TO THE SHOW HUNTER

A hunter may be of no specific breeding and successful hunters have included and are not limited to blends of thoroughbred, Irish Draught, native ponies (UK), Australian/New Zealand bred ponies, Welsh cob, Warmblood and Arabian blood.

CONFORMATION AND TYPE

A well conformed horse is not only attractive but most importantly functional. A stronger, sounder horse will be able to move better. Before you can evaluate a show hunter, one must become familiar with the standards and characteristics so important within the type of horse which can then appropriately be termed a show hunter. **ALWAYS** use common sense whilst keeping in mind the key points of what constitutes a quality type of show hunter when judging or choosing a horse to compete as a hunter.

The show hunter most importantly is a quality, upstanding well schooled, well mannered workmanlike horse carrying more bone and substance than the show hack. A good hunter is sound in both leg and wind. The hunter is a weight carrying animal capable of carrying his rider comfortably over varying terrain with ease and safety over a period of time with controlled, forward energy and strong, easy paces without appearing mechanical or dull. The picture should be one of strength, quality and presence with therefore eye appeal to the judge and spectator.

In addition to the general criteria of good conformation required in a show animal, look for;

- * Straight legs, front and rear view
- * Legs correctly set
- * Short, wide cannon bones with clean, well developed tendons
- * A hunter over 15hh should carry between 8-9 inches of bone.
- * A pony hunter or Galloway should carry the general attributes of a hunter as described throughout, with the bone being commensurate to the size of the animal.
- * Large, clean, flat joints (especially knees, hocks and fetlock joints)
- * Well shaped feet size which are in proportion to the horse
- * Short, broad and well muscled back and loins

Splints should not be discriminated against as long as they do not appear to cause unsoundness.

Scars are not the fault of the horse and providing that they do not impinge on the movement of the animal and are relatively unsightly, no penalty should be imposed.

A hunter is described as handsome as opposed to beautiful as one may describe the show hack, **HOWEVER** keep in mind common sense, if a hunter happens to be “pretty” or “beautiful” in the head yet carries all the necessary requirements to be termed a hunter, it is not to be penalised.

MOVEMENT, PACES AND MANNERS

A hunter's movement should be ground covering whilst being straight, careful and slightly higher than the hack.

His paces should be stronger and plainer than the light, extravagant movement of a hack, whilst being smooth, effortless, sweeping, elevated and clean.

Extreme, flashy movement is not acceptable in the hunter nor is short, choppy movement or high knee action.

Much has been stated regarding insurance and the safety of galloping especially in the Australian show ring, however a gallop is expected of hunters and a gallop should always form part of the workout **PROVIDING** show societies allocate adequate space.

A true gallop should be executed, however, flat strap and out of control is not correct. The gallop should be immediate without any sign of laziness with the horse covering the ground in big, easy strides. The horse should finish calmly and without pulling.

Rather than requesting a lengthened trot (where many riders appear to have the mistaken belief that a big, toe flicking extension will win a hunt class) a judge may ask for a strong trot with some lengthening to be shown.

Manners are extremely important in the hunter, but it is important that the hunter does not appear robotic.

Deliberate disobediences such as napping, bucking, rearing or refusing to walk or stand in the workout or line up should be penalised.

Again, commonsense must be applied so that small inconsistencies may be forgiven – ie a horse which changes leg to negotiate slippery ground, as long as this is rectified quickly is not displaying poor manners.

Common General Mistakes Regarding Type.

******JUDGES SHOULD NOT REWARD FAILED HACKS OR HORSES NOT DISPLAYING TRUE HUNTER TYPE******

* A horse which is substantial in build and which may also display the attributes BODY wise which we require in a hunter, yet is underpinned with fine, petite bone is not suitable to be called a hunter.

* A horse which has been overfed and is overweight either marginally or grossly in a poor attempt to imitate a substantial body, yet is underpinned with fine, petite bone is not suitable to be termed a hunter.

* A horse which carries the attributes we require in substance and bone, yet is poorly mannered and unable to perform calmly and obediently will not be rewarded as a hunter.

* A horse which carries the attributes we require in substance and bone but however has flashy, extreme, daisy cutting and/or eye catching movement which is correct for a show HACK, is not suitable to be termed a hunter.

* A large heavy horse breed crossed with a lighter type such as the thoroughbred may be suitable, however care should also be taken that even though the result may appear hunter in type, that it is not too heavy or too coarse in its bone, nor has heavy, plodding movement which would impede its suitability as a hunter.

*****If in doubt, always keep in mind the hunter's type and his suitability for the job of which he is intended to carry out.*****

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