

Western Riding

Western Riding is one of the oldest forms of equitation to survive to the present day. Its origins lie deep in history, for from the readings of Xenophon 400 years BC we learn the basics of riding a well-schooled horse, one that would move under weight transference, away from leg pressure, and be supple through its head, neck, shoulder, rib cage and hip, that ultimately would be so light and responsive that it could be ridden one-handed, and yet perform correctly enough that a man's life could depend on that horse working with his rider as a harmonious team. Around the early 1500's the Spanish conquistadors entered the New World and re-introduced the horse, and from here came the style of riding that has changed very little today; a style of riding that lends itself to a great many everyday riders, but still poses exacting challenges to make it one of the most interesting and practical disciplines on offer.

WESTERN CLASSES

Showmanship

In this class the handler is being judged. Conformation of the horse is not taken into account although grooming, condition and trim are. The majority of the points are gained from leading the horse, posing the horse for inspection, and the general manner in which the competitor presents their charge.

Pleasure

A good pleasure horse has a flowing stride of a reasonable length in keeping with its conformation. It should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort. It should be shown on a reasonably loose rein, but still have light contact and control. It should be responsive, yet smooth, in transitions when called for. Maximum credit should be given to the flowing, balanced and willing horse which gives the appearance of being fit and a pleasure to ride. This class will be judged on the performance, condition and conformation of the horse, however, a minimum of 20 percent of the judging should be based on condition and conformation. Entries will be penalised for excessive speeding or being on wrong leads.

Horsemanship

Riders are judged on seat, hands, ability to control and show the horse. Results as shown by the performance of the horse are not to be considered more important than the method used by the rider.

Western Riding

Competitors are required to ride one of the three patterns set out in the Society Rule Book. The class is designed to show the calm, easy paces of the horse and its ability to be correctly balanced at all times. Western riding is neither a stunt nor a race, but it should be performed with reasonable speed. The horse will be judged on quality of gaits, changes of leads, response to the rider, manners, disposition, and intelligence. Credit shall be given for the emphasis placed on smoothness, even cadence of gaits (i.e. starting and finishing the pattern with the same cadence), and the horse's ability to change leads precisely and easily at the rear and the front at the centre point between markers. The horse should have a relaxed head carriage showing response to the rider's hands, with a moderate flexion at the poll.

Western Trail

This class requires horse and rider to negotiate a series of obstacles placed on the arena surface. The horse is marked on its attitude on approaching and dealing with each element of the course. Obstacles include a gate, walking, jogging or loping over poles and backing between poles or around cones. Other obstacles can be four poles forming a square of between 5 and 6ft in which the horse must turn 360 degrees, side-passing over, in front of, or between poles in both directions, or carrying an object from one point to another.

Reining

In an approved reining class, any one of the approved American National Reining Horse Association reining patterns may be used. One of these patterns is selected by the judge and used by all competitors in the class. Each contestant will individually perform the required pattern – containing spins, stops, rollbacks, circles, flying changes and a backup. To rein a horse is not only to guide him but to control his every movement. The best-reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely – any movement on his own must be considered a lack of control. All deviations from the exact written pattern must be considered a lack of or temporary loss of control and therefore faulted according to the severity of deviation. Credit will be given for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority in performing the various manoeuvres while using controlled speed.