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Judging The Hunter Under Saddle

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Introduction

The hunter under saddle should be suitable to purpose. A hunter should move in a long, low frame and have the ability to increase its stride and cover ground with ease in a flowing movement. Those moving in an artificial frame with quick, short or choppy strides are not desirable. The hunter should have an interested expression and an alert eye. Hunters must be obedient and should willingly respond to cues of the rider. When asked to extend the trot or for a hand gallop, they should move forward strongly with appropriate forward impulsion. To obtain sufficient impulsion from the hindquarter, the poll should be level with or slightly above the withers. The face should either be on or slightly ahead of the vertical.

Class Routine

Horses are to be shown under saddle, but not to jump. The hunter under saddle is shown at all three gaits both ways of the arena. Horses are reversed to the inside or away from the rail. The judge may ask for a hand gallop and may ask the horse to halt and stand quietly on a free rein. Horses may be asked to change gaits at the flat-footed walk or the trot. Upward or downward transitions should be smooth. Horses should back easily and stand quietly. There should be light consistent contact on the horse's mouth.

The following terms are in English classes when a specific gait is called:

Walk - A lateral four-beat, flat-footed ground covering gait that should be energetic. The length of stride should be consistent with the size of horse, with straight true movement. A "jiggy", or slow-moving walk should be penalized.

Trot - The trot should be a balanced, two-beat, diagonal gait. It should be a long, low, ground-covering, evenly cadenced smooth movement. Smoothness of action is

more desirable than speed. Extreme speed and excessive knee action should be penalized.

Canter - The canter is a smooth, natural, free-moving, relaxed three-beat gait. The hunter should travel straight on both leads. A four-beat canter that is over-collected is to be penalized. Excessive speed is not desirable and should also be penalized.

Hand Gallop - A hand gallop should be a definite lengthening of stride. The horse should be under control at all times. The hunter must be able to pull-up easily, but need to not slide stop.

The hunter under saddle is judged on performance, condition and conformation. Horses that are well-balanced, smooth, free-moving, and good temperament should be given maximum credit. A judging should be on the basis of 80 percent for performance and 10 percent each for condition and conformation.

Characteristic	Good	Minor Faults	Major Faults	Elimination
Walk	energetic smooth straight interested	slow short stride not attentive	nervous jiggy	not walking
Trot	consistent smooth strong	too slow/fast	extreme speed knee action	breaks gait
Canter	smooth balanced straight relaxed	too slow/fast	over collected wrong lead pulls	4-beat not under control
Hand Gallop	smooth straight good stop	too slow/fast	poor stop pulls not collected	does not gallop breaks gait
Back	responsive correct flexion straight	hesitant	throws head gaps	does not back earring
General	smooth good attitude easy ride	over/under flexed sour ears tail switching not balanced	excessive movement bumps bit bad mouth	consistently breaks gait kicks ameness excessive cueing head too high/low

Note: "Beat" refers to the rhythmical progression or movement of the feet.

References:

United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) - Formerly: American Horse Show Association

American Paint Horse Association

American Quarter Horse Association

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