



Central Plains Dressage Society Newsletter APRIL-JUNE 2021

Fun Friendly Forward

Several members have submitted items for this newsletter and they are much appreciated. Always looking for more so if you like to write or see something interesting, please submit it.

Since show season is in full bloom, there are several checklists that can help you organize and get ready for your show.

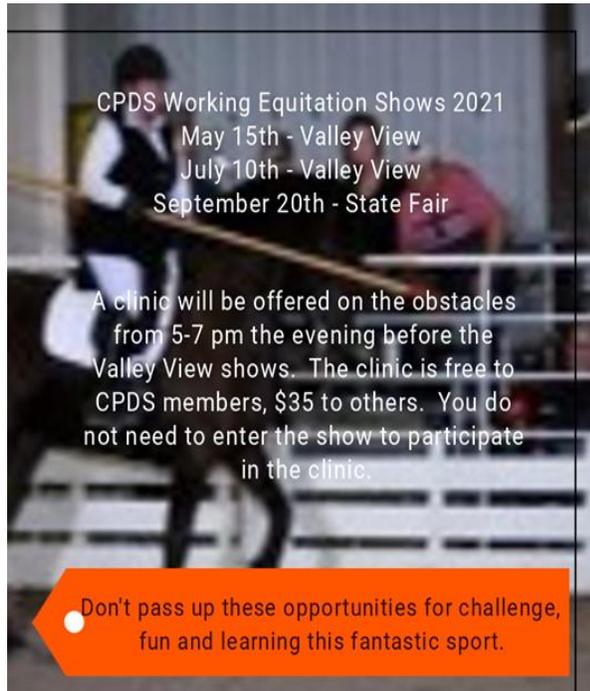
We have three recognized shows this quarter. There is a "book" containing our judges information. A lot of interesting details about them to read at your leisure.

Enjoy the spring!

Lee Ann Alf

leeannalf@gmail.com

Editor



Links and Contacts

Central Plains Dressage Society Web Page

<https://www.centralplainsdressage.org/>

CPDS Face Book Page

<https://www.facebook.com/Centralplainsdressage>

Show Information and Entries

<https://www.horseshowconsulting.com/>

Valley View Equestrian Center (clinics)

<http://hesseldressage.com/>

For Email CPDS News Blasts-Annie Houchin

(jahouch@yahoo.com)

For Newsletter Contributions-Lee Ann Alf

(leeannalf@gmail.com)

USEF/USDF Recognized Shows (CPDS)

April 24-25 - CPDS Spring Fling

Judge: Debbie Riehl Rodriguez "S"

June 5-6 - CPDS Junefest

Judge: Thomas Poulin "S"

June 26 & 26 - CPDS Summer Sizzler

Judge: Amy McElroy "S"

West Area Schooling Shows (CPDS)

(at Valley View unless noted)

April 3 - (concurrent with Lite WD show)-Susan Lang

May 15 - Marie Maloney

June 12- (concurrent with Lite WD show)-MarieMaloney

East Area Schooling Shows (CPDS)

April 17 at Sheridan Stable – Joann Williams "r" WD

May 8 at Rocking C Ranch – Janelle Williams

June 19 at Sheridan Stables – Aaron Wilson

Working Equitation Schooling Shows (CPDS)

(at Valley View)

May 15 - Marie Maloney

July 10 - Lurena Bell

Sept 20 - Robin Hessel

Ways to Get Involved with Central Plains

(submitted by Kathy Maxwell)

We are in the season when CPDS sponsored events are in full swing. We were so fortunate to be able to host almost 100% of our activities last year. Maybe you have considered, or wanted, to become more involved but weren't sure how or what opportunities there are. Let me give you an overview.

Volunteering:

A great way to get involved is to volunteer at the Horse Shows. We host schooling shows at various sites on the Eastern part of the state and Recognized and schooling shows at Valley View in Stillwater. Volunteer opportunities include preparing the barn/grounds prior to the show, acting as ring steward, gate keeper, taking temperatures and getting release signatures, announcing, or scribing. Depending on the number of volunteers shifts can run as little as 2 hours or last all day. Are you busy with a family member at the shows? Offer to work around their ride times or help switch out the arena to a long or short court when it's time. Shows are out most labor intensive activity and we are always happy to train you!

There are a number of committees that do the bulk of the work for the organization. Consider what talents you have that could be utilized by the committees. This wouldn't necessarily require a monthly commitment but maybe a one-time project.

- Membership
- Show
- Education
- Communications • Fund Raising
- Procedure
- Youth/Young Rider

Becoming a Board Member

The board is open to any adult, non-professional member of CPDS in good standing. Elections are held in November each year at our Annual General Meeting. If you are interested please let a board member know and we will include you on the ballot.

Supporting the Club Financially

Easy ways to support the club are by placing your Amazon orders through Amazon Smile and designating Central Plains Dressage as your beneficiary. This is at no cost to you and provides a portion of your sale to the club. Does your employer offer matching funds? CPDS is a 501c3 non-profit organization, which means all donations are tax deductible. Some employers offer paid time off for volunteering for a non-profit organization.

Participating

The best way to be involved and help the organization is to participate in activities, whether as a participant or volunteer. Your presence makes a difference in the type and number of activities we are able to host.

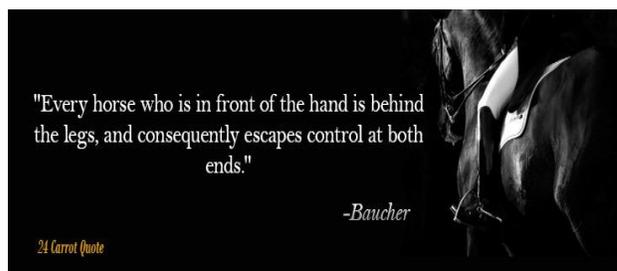
Youth Programming

(submitted by Kathy Maxwell)

Central Plains Dressage Society is one of the most active GMOs, not only in Region 9 but nationally. Over the past several years I have seen our youth participation explode. It is very exciting to see so many young people eager to learn and participate in the sport. Whether you have grown up in a horse-friendly family or you are the first family member to ever sit in the saddle, the club wants to help you grow in your knowledge of horses and dressage.

Not everyone has aspirations to show or become an FEI rider but we can all learn to enjoy our horses more through education and social opportunities. Understanding that 2021 will continue to limit our social interaction due to the pandemic, CPDS is implementing a Youth/ Young Rider Committee to develop opportunities for our youth. Plans are underway to host Western Dressage and Musical Freestyle clinics.

USDF offers a Youth Recognition Program to recognize youth that are dedicated to learning and serving both academically and through the horse community. Students in grades 6-12 are eligible. To qualify you must earn 2 scores of 60% or higher (at any level), be a Participating or Group Member of USDF, maintain a 2.5 GPA, receive 16 hours of equine related education, and volunteer for 20 hours. The program runs from July 1st to June 30th the following year, so if you are interested this is a great time to start planning. The forms for both education hours and volunteer hours are available online. Additionally there are a number of other awards, including an art award, available through USDF. Regardless of your interest there may be a program for you. Check it out at usdf.org/education/youth.asp.



"Every horse who is in front of the hand is behind the legs, and consequently escapes control at both ends."

-Baucher

24 Carrot Quote

Winter Blanket Blues

(submitted by Amy Mullins)

Yay! Winter's over!!

So now it's time to take care of those winter blankets! Did they survive another season? Do they need repairs? After several years without blanketing my year-round outside kept horses, the February polar-vortex frigid cold-air-blast this year caused me to pull down my blanket storage tubs and take stock.

I found I had enough blankets on hand in the right sizes to cover both of my horses through the cold spell (the benefit of having a "type"?), so all safe on that front. I also gained a deeper understanding in the importance of labeling. I knew what each blanket was when I bought it...but literal years have passed between then and now, and I spent way too much time chasing down receipts (still thankful I'm a digital-data packrat) to find out the size and weight of each.

Ok, so I was prepared now to fight the cold, but I also knew I'd need to figure out by spring what to do when it was time to get dirty blankets washed, possibly repaired, and maybe even re-waterproofed if needed. I began a little research (what better time than when it's below 10 degrees outside?). I do really love using a qualified and competent blanket repair service. It's so nice to send off a blanket, dirty and worn, and possibly torn, and have it come back looking almost as good as new (and at a fraction of the cost!). There are also definitely do-it-yourself options too though, which come in handy for any budget equestrian, but are also sometimes necessary for emergency mid-season fixes. Here are some things to consider:

Maintenance throughout the year

Wash off mud with a hose and air dry as often as needed. This is when having multiple blankets to cycle through really helps. Courtney Thompspon with T Squared Equine Blanket Repair and Laundry shared that an often over-looked area is checking every day to ensure all clasps are clean and free of mud/debris to ensure proper function and prevent damage/breakage.

Kathy Winkler, blanket wash and repair expert, shared that layers can be a friend in our part of the country too. Keep a mid-weight blanket/turnout rug, but also have an under layer that can be added for those unusually cold nights.

Cleaning

Always clean your blankets before placing them in storage for the next year. If you're going to wash your own blankets, it's best to use a local commercial washer to be safe. Kathy Winkler advises that even if your home machine seems like it can handle the load, they generally just aren't able to provide enough room for a thorough wash or equally important, for a clean rinse. If you do wash on your own, be sure to:

- Use a mild detergent, such as a special blanket wash formula like Schneiders Blanket Wash or SmartWorks Blanket Wash. There are lots of options here, so just pick your favorite. Check labels - you're looking for anything that is gentle, non-irritating, bio-degradable, and that can clean without affecting waterproofing.
- Remove any straps that can be removed and place them in a mesh laundry bag or a pillow case.
- Some manufacturers advise placing the entire blanket in a mesh bag to protect the washing machine.
- Always line dry – this was a particular point Kathy Winkler made. Horse blankets are not made to go through the dryer!

Repair

Waxed thread & carpet/canvas needles – Waxed thread can be purchased easily online. I bought mine on Amazon (remember to use smile.amazon.com and be sure to select Central Plains Dressage as your charity!!). As a suggested search, use "tandy leather waxed thread". This is an easy quick fix for anything small or easily hand-sewn back together.

Outdoor/heavy-duty nylon thread - Courtney Thompson shared that a strong nylon thread works too. "Outdoor thread" is something you can look for at places like Joanns.

Rambo Stormsure Blanket Repair which can be purchased from places like SmartPak - <https://www.smartpakequine.com/pt/rambo-stormsure-blanket-repair-7485>. Then there's a cool video on YouTube that shows us how this product can be used: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OcD4bqTF_Q. I've never tried this before, but it looks interesting!

Stormshield® Horse Blanket Repair Tape (<https://www.sstack.com/stormshield-horse-blanket-repair-tape/p/13666/>). I bought some of this to have on-hand – seems really easy to use.

Other tapes - Kathy Winkler shared another tip regarding emergency repairs. She asks that if you plan to send for permanent repair over the summer, to please do NOT use Guerilla tape or anything similar as a quick-fix. The tape residue it leaves behind is impossible to remove and can't be sewn over!

Broken hardware – Susan Lang shared with me that she has a treasure trove of bits and pieces. Do save all of your hardware from any old blankets that reach end-of-life so you'll have it on hand to use for future repairs.

Re-Waterproofing – If you feel like it's needed, you can re-waterproof using a waterproofing spray like Scotchguard, or a wash-in treatment like Nikwax Synthetic Rug Proof. You can even find boot/shoe waterproofing sprays that will work. Always check for fabric compatibility, and look for breathability as well.

Storage

Original bags work well for storage, if you saved them and can fit them back in. If you use a professional cleaner, you may receive it back already nicely bagged for storage. Space bags/vacuum bags work too. I'd been using storage tubs, and putting as many as would fit (usually two-three) into a tub. Digging through this last time trying to find the right size/right weight for each horse this time motivated me to find something better. I found stackable storage containers at Walmart that were just the right size for one blanket per container. Now I can label each container with the size/blanket weight then stack them up to the ceiling and never have to dig again to find what I need, when I need it.

Local Blanket Wash & Repair Service Providers

CPDS does not endorse any of the service providers listed below. This is also by no means a comprehensive listing of everyone in our area that provides blanket services!

Kathy Winkler - 316.204.1764. Based out of Kansas but makes trips into Oklahoma for pickup/dropoff. Please call to see if pickup is available for your location or if a meeting site can be arranged. Cleaning and general repair services offered.

T Squared Equine Blanket Repair and Laundry LLC - Newly opened by mom & daughter team Courtney & Sandy Thompsen. Located in Lexington, OK (about 30 mi south of Norman). Offers cleaning, repairs, and reproofing. Please call to see if you are within pickup area or if drop-off arrangements can be made (regular trips made to the Tulsa/Bixby area so it's possible if you're on the East side that you could still find something that would work). More information on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/T-Squared-Equine-Blanket-Repair-and-Laundry-llc-177325803899805>.

Equine and More, LLC – 918-521-3431. Specializing in rural areas. Pick up & delivery available. Cleaning & repair services offered.

Fox Cleaners, Inc – 918-973-4FOX. Greater Tulsa area. Pick up or drop off. Cleaning, Repairs, Waterproofing services available. They'll take care of blankets, coolers, sheets, wraps or saddle pads!

Kari Nichols – 918-399-5785. Based out of Cleveland. Offers cleaning and general repair services. Call to arrange for pickup if you are in that area, or you can arrange for drop off as well.



Horse Show Checklist

Human Supplies

- Camera & batteries
- Cell phone & charger
- Sunscreen
- Casual Hat/sunglasses
- Snacks & drinks
- Folding chairs
- Aspirin
- Band Aids
- Lint roller
- Safety pins
- Hair ties
- Makeup bag/toiletries
- Sewing kit
- Cover ups for grooming
- Blanket in cold weather

Clothing

- Gloves
- Boots/Socks
- Boot pulls/jack
- Spurs
- Breeches/jodhpurs
- Show pants and chaps
- Show coat
- Show shirt
- Undergarments
- Stock tie and pin (dressage)
- Number pins/lapel pin
- Helmet or hat
- Hair net/hair pins
- Watch (eventing)
- Belt
- Belt buckle (western)

Stable Supplies

- Water buckets & clips
- Grain bucket
- Muck bucket
- Bedding
- Manure fork
- Crossties
- Extension cord
- Duct tape
- Flashlight

Horse Supplies

- Lunge line/lunge whip
- Polo wraps/boots
- Shipping boots
- Stable sheet/blanket
- Cooler/sweat sheet
- Large jugs of water
- Bales of hay
- Hay net
- Grain and supplements
- Equine first-aid kit
- Horse treats

Tack

- Halter & lead line
- Bridle
- Show halter
- Saddle
- Girth/cinch
- Saddle pads/blanket
- Martingale
- Breastplate/breastcollar
- Whip

Grooming

- Brushes/grooming kit
- Braiding/banding kit
- Mane rubber bands
- Scissors
- Clippers
- Fly spray
- Shampoo
- Sponges
- Towels/rags
- Sweat scraper
- Coat polish
- White spot cleaner
- Leather soap & conditioner
- Silver polish

Trailer Supplies

- Trailer ties
- Trailer jack
- Spare tire

Paperwork

- Copy of tests or pattern
- GPS or maps
- Class list/schedule
- Rulebook
- Membership cards
- Horse registration
- Coggins test
- Health certificate
- Money/ID/checkbook
- List of emergency numbers

Get Ready, Get Set, Show!

Timing Schedule To Help You Get To Your Test On Time.

(Submitted by Robin Hessel)

- The night before, check in and immediately put your number on your bridle and halter.
- Familiarize your horse with the warm-up and show ring. Ride an easy schooling session just to get to know the rings you will be riding in the next day. Bring sugar to help your horse get over scary things.
- Clean your horse, braid, clean your tack, set out feed for am and review your test. Get to bed early.
- Fill in timing for the show at the bottom of the list and work up the page. Fill in how long each activity should take to make sure you allow enough time to get everything done and yet not feel rushed or be too early. This is only a suggestion. Modify it and make it your own. Planning each activity and following a time-line will help you stay on schedule. This time is for you and your horse to get ready for a test. Pay attention to what your horse needs to be successful in this test.

__:__ Feed, and clean stall this takes: __ minutes
__:__ Fix braids, groom completely ____minutes
__:__ Take your horse on a walk ____minutes
__:__ Review your test _____minutes
__:__ Check on show timing _____minutes
__:__ Lunge your horse _____minutes
__:__ Get dressed _____minutes
__:__ Final light groom, check braids _____minutes
__:__ Tack up your horse _____minutes
__:__ one last bathroom run _____minutes
__:__ Check on show timing, are they running ahead or behind ____minutes
__:__ Boots, helmet, spurs, gloves, coat, tie _____minutes
__:__ Bridle your horse, get whip, check number is secure ____minutes
__:__ Walk warmup, review your test, visualize your ride ____ minutes
__:__ Warm up (reminders and suppling) _____ minutes
__:__ Walk to the show ring, review the test _____ minutes
__:__ Test time _____ minutes
__:__ cool down your horse walking and review your ride _____ minutes

CPDS Working Equitation Schooling Shows 2021

Dates: May 15 at Valley View, Stillwater, OK
(w/ AHA show & open schooling dressage show)

July 10 at Valley View, Stillwater, OK
(w/ open schooling dressage show)

September 20 at OKC State Fairgrounds



To Enter: www.horseshowconsulting.com

CLINIC:

A clinic will be offered on the obstacles from 5-7 pm the evening before the Valley View shows. The clinic is free to CPDS members, \$35 to others. You do not need to enter the show to participate in the clinic.

The September show is in conjunction with the OKC State Fair, so the date may change.



Don't pass up these opportunities for challenge, fun and learning about this fantastic sport.

Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez



Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez is a licensed FEI C/3* Judge, FEI Young Horse 3*, "S" Judge, Freestyle and Young Horse Judge as well as an instructor.

A Judge takes Your Questions

Q&A from the USDF Judges Committee By Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez

If a judge gives a score of 8 and comments "Good" or leaves the comment box blank, why is the score then not a 9 or a 10? What would it take to make it a 10?

According to the definitions assigned by the US equestrian Federation to each number in the 0-to-10 scale of marks, 8 is "good," 9 is "very good," and 10 is "excellent." (note that 10 does not mean "perfect"!)

What may limit the score for a well-executed movement are the quality of the horse's gaits and amount of brilliance with which it performs. At times there may be a certain aspect that could be improved to bring an 8 up to a 9, but to do so might require a lengthy explanation that is not feasible during the fast-moving dressage test. Therefore, the judge may opt to leave the comment box blank.

The horses that typically receive the most marks of 9 and 10 are the top international competitors. The reason is that the quality is so good on top of the correctness of their training. However, even an average mover could conceivably earn a top score for the so-called non-brilliant movements, which include halts, rein backs, turns on the haunches, and transitions.

When I judge, I love to reward good work with high scores. Some judges may feel less secure about giving high marks, but we are striving to teach our upcoming judges to use the entire range of numbers, both high and low.

Why does the horse produce foam in his mouth, and why does it sometimes happen only on one side of the mouth? Does foam (or lack thereof) affect the judging?

I posed this question to someone who is an expert in this area: renowned equine-biomechanics expert Dr. Hilary Clayton.

According to Dr. Clayton, the foam that we see is frothy saliva. When a horse is relaxed and flexing at the poll, he salivates. Gentle chewing introduces little bubbles of air into the saliva and makes it frothy, just like frothing milk or whipping cream. As the horse gently moves his jaw, some of the froth escapes between his lips and forms white "lipstick." the froth tends to escape when the jaw is relaxed, so it may

not be seen on one side if the horse is stiff on that side and has his jaw clamped. So dressage trainers and judges regard foam on the lips as a good thing because it indicates that the horse's jaw is relaxed and salivating.

Copious amounts of stringy or slimy saliva are not regarded as a good sign, however, as it may indicate a problem in the horse's mouth.

How does a French-link bit work on the horse's mouth as compared to a regular snaffle?

I'll start by saying that, as a judge, I have no preference regarding bits except to see that the bit is fitted properly and that the horse is relaxed and quietly chewing, as described above. Personally, I have had good luck with French-links in that the horse seems to accept the contact on each rein more evenly.

For the specifics regarding the bit action, I went back to Dr. Clayton. Here's what she told me:

The French-link bit has a U-shaped profile when it lies on the horse's tongue. The single-jointed snaffle, in contrast, has a V-shaped profile. The French-link allows for more room for the tongue and better accommodates the shape of the tongue. The problem with some Frenchlinks is that the center piece can be too wide. Ideally the link in a double-jointed bit should be narrow so as to avoid having the joints lie over the bars of the mouth.

Why do some judges stand when they return the rider's salute while others remain seated? Is sitting disrespectful?

When a judge stands as the rider comes down the center line at the beginning or end of a test, it is basically a courtesy to acknowledge the rider. Standing is not required in the rules, and it is not disrespectful if the judge does not stand.

Standing and sitting twice during every test, at the average dressage show with 50 to 60 rides per day, means that the judge gets up and down approximately 120 times. This is hard on a person's knees. Also, some judge's boxes have low ceilings that do not allow the judge to stand upright. Many male judges acknowledge the rider by removing or tipping their hats.

Why are full bridles required at the higher levels of competition when we're told that well-schooled horses don't need them?

Actually, full (double) bridles are no longer required; per the USEF dressage rules, a rider may compete at any level in a snaffle. However, for certain USEF high-performance qualifying and championship classes, a double bridle remains mandatory. For specifics, refer to DR121.4 in the USEF Rule Book (online at usef.org). It is important that a horse be able to perform properly in both a snaffle and a double bridle to demonstrate correct acceptance of both.

What is the most important element at Training Level that would earn you scores of 70 percent and best prepare you for the next level?

There is no single element that will guarantee a competitor high scores. Dressage tests are written to evaluate a combination of correct basic work. Per the USEF rules, the purpose of training Level is to confirm that the horse is supple and moves freely forward in a clear and steady rhythm, accepting contact with the bit. A score of 70 percent is quite high and becomes progressively harder to achieve as you move up the levels. It is more challenging for some horses to attain that score, especially if one or

more gaits lacks correct rhythm, which is the first requirement in the pyramid of training. The next levels of the pyramid, suppleness and correct contact, can contribute to improving the rhythm and add quality to the horse's work. If you are able to score in the mid- to upper 60s and have developed your horse's ability to lengthen his strides, maintain rhythm and balance on smaller circles, and perform leg-yields, then you should be ready to move on to First Level. note, however, that each test of the level becomes progressively more demanding, which is why it is so important to develop a solid foundation by following the requirements of the pyramid of training. My suggestion is to work to improve your scores a little at each show by using the comments on your tests to direct your efforts. if you do achieve a 70, then you can feel very proud of your accomplishments!

What is the biggest pet peeve among judges?

I think that every judge would answer this question differently. I can only give you my own thoughts here, but I hope that other judges will agree with some of what I have to say. A judge's first responsibility is toward the welfare of the horse. it can be very discouraging to see a horse that is being punished by the rider— not with spurs or whip but because the rider lacks the ability to properly communicate with the horse. Tis was one of the reasons that the rider collective marks were changed in the 2011 USEF tests: to emphasize the importance of the rider's ability to influence the horse properly. We are looking for harmony between horse and rider, which can be achieved only if the rider has an effective seat and the ability to aid the horse correctly. of course, sometimes things don't go as well at the show as we would like, but the judge can tell when the proper basics have not been established and must score accordingly.

Another aspect that judges would like to see improve is the geometry and accuracy of figures. Riders do not realize how many points they lose needlessly. Take time to study your test patterns thoroughly. Walk through the tests on foot in your arena. Make sure that you know exactly where your circles should be. Plan transitions so that they happen when your body is as close to the letter as possible while gauging your horse's attentiveness so that you know exactly when you need to aid. A slightly early transition is better than one that is late due to lack of preparation or resistance. A rider needs to be able to "read" how the horse is feeling that day in the test and to strive to be as accurate as possible.

I myself dislike it when I see a rider attempting to put the horse on the bit by "seesawing" the reins, which causes the horse's nose to wag from side to side. it is fairly common among novice riders in an effort to keep the horse's head down. My suggestion is to learn to develop a proper connection by teaching the horse to stretch over the topline and seek the contact. The horse should move from the inside leg to the outside rein while showing an elastic contact and swing through the back. even in introductory Level tests, the horse should show a degree of acceptance of the bit and bend. Yes, this is all easier said than done, but that's what learning to ride is all about! I think we all want to do justice to our horses, and with time and patience your efforts will pay off.

Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez, of Golden, CO, is a USEF "S" judge, an "R" sport horse judge, and a member of the USDF "L" faculty. She has earned her USDF bronze, silver, and gold medals as well as numerous Horse of the Year awards on horses she has trained herself. She is an active competitor as well as an instructor and trainer.

Jodi Lees



Jodi Lees is an accomplished Dressage professional. She currently continues to compete, to train horses, to train riders, to teach clinics across the nation, and to judge shows as an “S” judge across the country and as a guest in other countries as well.

Jodi has been exposed to excellent education and training. She continues her education at symposiums and forums each year through a number of organizations such as USEF, USDF, IDTC, IDRC and Judge’s forums.

She has ridden regularly in her career with many well-respected professionals such as:

- Steffen Peters
- Lilo Fore
- Jan Ebeling
- Conrad Schumacher
- Robert Zandvoort
- Henk Von Bergen
- David Hunt
- Natalie Lamping

Jodi has worked diligently to accomplish a high level of both riding and teaching skills.



Some of the fundamental components of Jodi's philosophy of training and teaching are as follows:

- All horses can benefit from well ridden dressage
- Correct dressage training will improve the balance, strength and confidence of the horse
- Riders of all ages and levels of experience can continue to improve their riding skills with knowledgeable and sensitive instruction
- Education is necessary and should be pursued by all trainers and riders alike with insatiable appetite

- Every horse offers an opportunity to learn
- Variety of exercises and experience enhance the training and attitude of the horse and rider alike
- Concentration, dedication and perseverance are necessary to reach challenging goals.
- Patience, love of horses and enjoying the process are necessary for true success.

Through hard work, discipline and dedication, Jodi Lees has attained the following credentials:

- USDF Bronze, Silver & Gold Medalist
- USEF Licensed "S" judge
- USDF Performance Awards at 2nd, 3rd, 4th, Prix St. Georges and Intermediare 1 levels
- Silver Medal Rider Award from South Carolina Dressage and Combined Training Association (SCDCTA)
- CDS Qualified Riding member
- Successful completion of all USDF Instructor Certification Workshops and Pre-certification exams
- Some of the competitive recognition Jodi has received:
 - 2017 SCDCTA Prix St-Georges Open Horse of the Year - Sequel
 - 2016 SCDCTA Third Level Open Horse of the Year - Sequel
 - 2015 SCDCTA Prix St-Georges Open Horse of the Year - Lenox
 - 2015 GDCTA Prix St-Georges Reserve Champion Rider - Amour



Amy McElroy



Amy McElroy, a highly skilled dressage trainer, coach, and judge, is well-known in South Carolina and throughout the Southeastern United States for her ability to train and coach adult amateurs to a high level of success at recognized dressage competitions. In addition to a full teaching and clinic schedule, Amy is a highly sought after judge and can frequently be seen in the judge's box at any one of the many recognized dressage shows or events throughout the country. Amy currently holds these licenses, her USDF L with distinction, USEF 'r', USEF "R", and USEF "S" level judge with distinctions in Freestyle, Young Horse and Dressage Seat Equitation .

Born in 1960 in Brooklyn, New York, Amy has had a passion for horses for as long as she can remember. Her riding career began early on when she took English riding lessons in Elementary school and quickly turned into a passion for jumping when she rode with Nancy Thomas of Thomas School of Horsemanship and later with Patrick Rice of Rice Farms. She continued to train and compete through secondary school, and as she prepared for graduation, she knew she wanted to pursue riding as an occupation. She also wanted to fulfill her fathers' dream of having his first-born child graduate from college with a four-year degree. Salem College in West Virginia satisfied both dreams as she earned her bachelor's degree in Equestrian Studies with a minor in Business.

As part of her curriculum, she attended the prestigious Meredith Manor in Waverly, West Virginia under the tutelage co-founder Kay Meredith and the late Bodo Hagen. She graduated with a Riding Masters III degree with a major in Dressage Training and a minor in Teaching. With degrees in hand, Amy headed for warmer temperatures and discovered sunny South Carolina, where she taught and managed Reflections Stable in Columbia, South Carolina for a few years. During that time, she trained with Cindy Sydnor whenever possible and actively competed in dressage and combined tests. Still wanting to advance her dressage, Amy became a working student in 1983 at Graf Bae Farm in Aiken, South Carolina. For seven years she trained under the expertise of the late and great Bari Von Buedugen and for three years of those with then rising star Hokan Thorn. In 1991, Amy opened her own dressage training and teaching business in Aiken, SC and that same year married her husband Daniel McElroy. Dan has been extremely supportive in all of Amy's equestrian endeavors and can be seen at the occasional show or clinic when he is not attending to fatherly duties or busy maintaining their lovely home. Amy has and continues to enjoy great success in the show ring (earning her USDF bronze, silver, and gold medals among many other distinctions). Currently under Amy's tutelage she has coached over 25 clients to earn their bronze, silver, and gold medals. While Amy works successfully with all riders-she has found her particular niche in working with adult amateurs. She loves to teach and to see her students succeed. The McElroy Group is competitive and has an ambitious show and clinic schedule, which keeps Amy busy most of the year. Amy actively rides and trains horses of all levels on a daily basis. She has trained with Gunnar Ostergaard since 1998. Amy also continues to be a student of Hokan Thorn. She credits him for helping her to earn her USDF gold medal as well as the final scores needed to apply for her "S" judges license.



Amy added judging to her resume in 1999 when she graduated from the USDF L judges program with distinction in Raleigh, NC. She then went on to successfully complete the “r” program in Boulder, Colorado and was licensed in 2001. In 2006, after a stringent and rigorous training program in Pebble Beach, and testing in Sacramento, California she was promoted to “R” status. Amy then went on to pursue her final judging goal of becoming a Senior judge. The program and testing was conducted at the Devon Horse Show, Pennsylvania. In 2017 Amy completed the

requirements and testing to become an “S” judge. You can see Amy in the judge’s box in about 20 competitions per year throughout the country. In addition and since its inception, Amy writes her popular “Ask the Judge” column for The Aiken Horse magazine, where she answers interesting judging questions.

While running a thriving business, Amy leads a rich family life and is very in love with husband Dan (1991) and involved with her two sons Marshall (1995) and Russell (1997). The family enjoys the beach and lake especially with their boat (SEA-NILE). They also enjoy watching movies, playing board games, listening to music, and just having a good time with family and friends and their dogs and cats.

Ask the Judge

Questions about dressage with Amy McElroy. In Amy’s popular column, written for “The Aiken Horse,” she answers readers’ questions about dressage.

Dear Amy,

I am going to be competing at the dressage Training Levels starting this summer. I know everyone says, “remember to use your corners,” but I am not sure what that means and what the judges are looking for. I also don’t see where you get a score for the corners. I also wondered if the short sides are scored, since I do not see a place for a score for that, either. What is the judge really looking for in the Training Levels?

Dressage Newbie

Dear Newbie,

It’s great that you will be starting your dressage show journey this summer. These are very important and interesting questions. Let’s start with another question: what is Training Level? On all dressage tests each level has its own purpose. You can find the purpose written on every test. It is useful to know what is going to be required and expected of you and your horse. This is what judges will be taking into consideration when critiquing your ride. Let’s see what the Training Level purpose states:

To confirm the horse demonstrates correct basics, is supple and moves freely forward in a clear and steady rhythm with a steady tempo, accepting contact with the bit.

In other words, these are the basics and fulfill the bottom four rungs of the training scale.

For each Training Level test, it is interesting to take into consideration how many test movements there are, and of these, which ones are coefficients (double points), how many transitions, how many corners, and how many short sides are in each test. Training Level is comprised of three tests. Let's take a look and make some comparisons:

Training 1: 13 test movements, 6 coefficients, 11 transitions, 10 corners, 0 full short sides

Training 2: 16 test movements, 6 coefficients, 11 transitions, 15 corners, 4 full short sides

Training 3: 15 test movements, 7 coefficients, 12 transitions, 11 corners, 0 full short sides

Training Level includes the following gaits and movements: working trot and canter, medium and free walks, 20-meter circles left and right in trot and canter, stretchy circle (introduced in Training 2) and a trot three-loop serpentine (Training 3).

As you can see these tests all have many transitions. In fact, it may surprise you to learn that scores for the transitions make up more than 50% of your final score at this level. So how do you perform a correct transition? According to the USEF rule book DR 107.1, the changes of gait and pace should be clearly shown at the prescribed marker, they should be quickly made yet must be smooth and not abrupt. The rhythm of a gait or pace should be maintained up to the moment when the gait or pace is changed or the horse halts. The horse should remain light in hand, calm and maintain a correct position. In DR107.2 the same applies to transitions from one movement to another. In other words when riding your transitions, the objectives should be smooth, willing, calm, regular, obedient, and accurate.

In Training Level tests, the coefficients are assigned to nearly half the movements of each test. Since these moves are counted double it is even more important to be secure in your ability to ride what is requested as effortlessly and accurately as possible.

There are an abundance of corners you must ride through in each test. Although there is not a specific scoring box for just the corners, this does not mean they are not being judged. Keep in mind that from the time you enter at A and until you salute and leave the arena, your judge will be taking every stride into consideration. The corner scores will be combined either with a movement before, a movement after, or with a transition. Corners are very important because they encourage your horse to stay supple, and to rebalance as well as to prepare for the next move, to name a few of their benefits. When riding corners, as a general rule you want your horse's bend to correspond to the correct bend of the smallest size circle of each gait in that test. In Training Level, the smallest circles are 20 meters in both the trot and canter. It is generally accepted expected that corners should be ridden about two meters smaller than the smallest required circle. Therefore, in Training Levels, corners should have the bend and depth of about an 18-meter circle.

Your short sides are also taken into consideration in the same way the circles are in the scoring. Although there is not a direct score for every short side, they will be linked to a movement before, a movement after, or a movement within. So, yes, they are being judged. Short sides are not a rest break. Similar to corners, they are where you can regroup, encourage and balance your horse as you prepare for what's to come.

Here are a few ideas to keep in mind specifically when riding Training Levels:

1. Halts may be done through the walk, and you may move off from the halt through the walk. If you do choose the walk, I would suggest limiting your trot to halt and halt to trot transitions to no more than three walking strides.
2. The trot may be ridden rising or sitting. Try to decide which type of style would best show your horse off and keep him moving freely forward. You will not score higher just because you are sitting.
3. A reminder that in correctly ridden circles and in the serpentine you DO NOT "use" the corners: in other words, do not go deeply into them.
4. You may wear half chaps, gaiters or leggings in solid black or brown, without fringe, matching the color of your footwear, and made of smooth leather or leather-like material instead of tall riding boots if you prefer.

Other thoughts to impress your judge at any level.

1. Be prepared. Know your test and be able to perform it reliably.
2. Be on time.
3. Remember to wear your number and to remove any schooling boots your horse may have been wearing in the warm-up because these are not allowed in a test.
4. Know the rules, purpose and directives of each level and test you ride.
5. Smile and be confident.

I hope I have clarified what is expected in the Training Level tests and the way corners and short sides are incorporated into a score.

Enjoy the ride!

Ask the Judge – National Championships

Dear Amy,

I heard you were on the panel of judges at the U.S Dressage National Finals this year at the Kentucky Horse Park. Congratulations! I'm hoping someday to be able to participate as a competitor in the finals. I was wondering, how does riding a test in the Nationals differ from riding a test at a regular rated USEF/USDF show? Is it also different from riding a test at a Regional Championship?

Ambitious!

Dear Ambitious,

It was certainly an honor and very exciting to be one of the 13 judges selected for the Nationals, which is a Level Five Competition, the highest level under USEF rules. To answer your question, you will find many differences between riding in a regular show and competing in a Regionals or a Nationals. Let's take a look.

At the Nationals you will be competing against the country's best horse and rider teams at each level, from Training through Grand Prix. There are also Freestyles at all the levels except Training, Prix St. Georges and Intermediaire II, and these have become very popular. Championship classes at all levels are divided into Open and Adult Amateur divisions. The Championship test will be the highest test of each level. For instance, if you compete at the First Level, your test will be First Level Three. In addition to the Championships, the Nationals also offer non-championship classes at most levels. These non-championship classes are run according to the same rules as a regular recognized dressage show.

Here are some differences between the three types of competition:

- For a US Finals class, your ride time is done by a draw, and you will not know the exact schedule of the class until the draw is complete. However, you will know, for instance, that the First Level Championship starts at 8 am and runs until 12. At a recognized show and a Regionals you will have an assigned ride time that you will know it well in advance.
- If you are riding in a US Finals class, you the only one allowed to ride your horse during the show, except to walk on a long rein. This rule is strictly enforced: if someone else rides your horse, you will be eliminated. At a Regionals, the same rule applies, but at a regular recognized show, anyone can ride your horse with no penalty.
- For a US Finals class, all tests must be ridden by memory. This rule also applies at Regionals. At a regular recognized show, a caller is allowed with no penalty.
- For a US Finals test, carrying a riding whip is forbidden and will entail elimination. The same applies for Regionals. At a recognized show, a riding whip is allowed with no penalty.
- For a US Finals class, you will have three judges: at C, at M or H, and at B or E. All the judges will have S or FEI status. At a Regionals, you will have two judges: at C and at B or E. At a regular recognized show, you will only have one judge most of the time, stationed at C, although there are some qualifying classes that do require two judges. (The second judge will be at B or E.) When there is more than one judge for any class, the judges' scores are averaged to arrive at your final percentage. After your test, you will be able to have copies of all the individual score sheets from each judge.
- All US Finals classes are scored electronically. Most arenas do have an electronic scoreboard, where you will be able to see your name in lights and all the judge's scores when your test is complete. At some Regionals, you might have electronic scoring and a scoreboard. At most recognized shows, you are not likely to see one.

- For a US Finals class, there is a mandatory awards ceremony with ribbons to tenth place. Your judge at C will be one of the award presenters. At a Regionals, the awards ceremony is also mandatory and there are ribbons to eighth place. For a regular dressage class, there are ribbons through sixth place, and there is often no awards ceremony.

- Any horse competing in a US Finals class must be stabled at the showgrounds. At a Regionals, the same rule applies. At a regular recognized show, you can trailer in and out with no penalty.

The US National Finals has an electric atmosphere and beautifully decorated arenas. It feels very special and it may be as exciting to be a judge at this competition as it is to be a competitor. Riding in the finals is a great goal. If you do not qualify next year, I recommend going as a spectator, or, better yet as a volunteer – no dressage show can succeed without dedicated volunteers, and you will have the opportunity to participate in one of our most important and impressive events!

Wishing you luck in your journey! Ride forward.

