

About Pony Club - Competitions

THE COMPETITIONS

Pony Clubs organise different competitions throughout the year These provide a change from Rally Day routines, and give riders an opportunity to compete against each other they are conducted at Club, zone and state levels, and include Dressage, Showjumping, One Day Events, Gymkhanas, Sporting, and Mounted Games.

The events usually fall into one of the following categories:

- CLOSED EVENTS Only members of that Club may compete. This is where riders get their initial experience at events.
- INVITATION EVENTS Only members of the host Club and clubs specifically invited may compete. This can be a good way to gain further experience in events.
- OPEN EVENTS Members of any Pony Club may compete. This can be a good way to get further experience in different settings, without necessarily stepping up a level.
- ZONE CHAMPIONSHIPS You do not need to be selected to attend these, although you must have Club endorsement about your membership and being paid up, and must have attended three Rally Days in the past year. You need to feel fairly confident to attend these. You should have competed at a few Club level events, and had plenty of practice (and, for Showjumping, are comfortable at your grade). Ask your instructors or Club Captain for advice as to whether a certain event would be suitable for you to attend, and whether you would be capable, of going.
- STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS Strictly for serious competitors. Competition is extremely tough. You must be selected by the Zone to apply for these, and must be able to convince them that you are one of the best representatives for the Zone. You may be required to attend special competitions for scrutiny by the Zone Chief Instructor. It is necessary to be competing at Open, non-Pony Club events to gain the experience required. These competitions are usually held in country towns and are a long way away.

For Showjumping, you will need to be jumping a course at about:

- 90cm to 120cm for under 13 years,
- 120cm to 135cm for 13 to 15 years,
- 135cm to 150 cm for 15-17 years, in regular competition.

If you think you would like to apply for these, see the Club Captain or Chief Instructor well before the event. Events are held in various disciplines. Details can be found in the Pony Club manual “Riding” but are presented here briefly.

DRESSAGE

The word “dressage” come from the French word meaning “to train”. All disciplines of horse riding require the basic principles of dressage to be applied in order for the horse to be supple and obedient enough to perform the specific tasks asked of it by the rider.

A dressage competition seeks to find the rider who is best able to perform these principles in a competition situation before a judge. Riders are given a set of movements which they are to learn in a sequence and then perform in an arena, these “tests” are usually between six and ten minutes long and the arena is sixty metres long by twenty metres wide.. The required movements are broken down into separate sections and the judge gives a mark out of ten for each movement.

As well as for the movements, marks are also awarded for the horse and rider’s overall performance in the test under the headings: Submission, Impulsion, Paces, and the Position of the Rider and effect of the aids. The points for all sections are totalled and the rider with the highest total wins. The tests are usually from a standard set and are themselves graded in difficulty.

The early tests only require basic control of the horse and simple movements while the more advanced tests require expert riding and extremely difficult movements.

All Dressage tests MUST be performed in a snaffle bit.

Dressage whips and spurs are allowed for Dressage.

SHOWJUMPING

This type of competition involves negotiating a course of obstacles over which the horse must jump without knocking them down and in an obedient manner. The courses vary, producing different types of competitions that may be aimed at making imposing and technically difficult courses (such as the Grand Prix), or may be aimed at finding the rider who can jump the highest in a Topscore competition.

Sometimes the competitions may be only for training purposes (eg clear rounds). Most require the ability to "jump clear" ie with no penalties for knocking down a jump, and the ability to do it at speed. This is not always the case, especially with the trend towards technically difficult courses where excessive speed will cause errors of judgement.

Pony Club currently has its own grading system for showjumping. Beginners start at E grade which is about 45 cm, to A grade which is about 105 cm. When you reach this and are jumping well you can jump open competitions (eg at shows), which begin with D grade at 105 cm.

EQUITATION

More interest has developed in recent years in EQUITATION classes - These consist of one round over a smooth flowing course over moderate height jumps. They are judged much like dressage and points are awarded for the manner in which each jump is negotiated. This way the rider with the best style is the winner.

These competitions are very useful for training purposes as the riders are forced to ride at their best overall.

This must be ridden in a snaffle bit. Dressage whips and spurs are allowed.

ONE DAY EVENTS (ODEs)

One day events consist of three phases, being dressage, showjumping, and cross country. By including these three phases, ODEs find the horse and rider who are best all round rather than the combination of horse and rider which is best at only one of the phases.

ODE horses need to be fitter than horses used for other competitions as they must have the endurance to cope with the crosscountry course, and then jump a showjumping round afterwards.

Dressage is always held first in a ODE as the horse must be sufficiently well trained to concentrate on the dressage phase of the test before doing the cross-country. After the cross-country phase, the horse must be fit enough to complete a showjumping course.

The event is scored by first deducting the marks obtained in dressage from the total possible points (eg if you score 130 points out of 210 in dressage, your score for the ODE will be 80). After this, faults are added for the crosscountry and the showjumping. The winner is the rider with the least faults.

In Pony Club, ODE are graded in a similar fashion to showjumping. depending on the number of entries, these may be held over two days. The Dressage phase must be ridden with a snaffle bit, but no whip is allowed. Showjumping and cross-country may be ridden with other Pony Club approved bits.

GYMKHANAS

Gymkhanas are competitions for hacking and are similar to shows. Riders and their horses are presented at their best and ride around a ring with the other competitors before a judge. There are different classes throughout the day and in them the judge chooses the riders that best deserve to win that class.

Class names are usually things like "Best Educated Mount under fifteen hands" or "Girl Rider Thirteen years to Fifteen Years" (or "Longest Tail" for beginners and littlies). When the riders are riding around the ring the judge selects riders who are likely to win or get a place and calls them into the centre.

All riders called out are asked to perform the same workout and from their performance in these the judge selects a winner and the placegetters. No double bridles are allowed.

SPORTING

Sporting activities let riders compete in many different fun games-like activities that are run usually against the clock. The fastest usually wins the individual events, however riders can be eliminated from events for various infringements such as knocking over a pole, missing a turn around a pole or marker or stepping outside the lines. At the end of the day, the rider who has won the most events is usually declared the overall winner from that age-group.

Some examples of sporting events are:

- Bending, where riders have to weave up and back along a line of posts;
- Keyhole, where riders have to ride up a narrow corridor marked on the ground, turn within a marked circle, and ride back.

MOUNTED GAMES

These are similar, to the sporting events, except that riders compete in teams. usually all riders must complete the course and the time is recorded for for all riders to finish as a group. No whips or spurs allowed.

THE JAMBOREE

This is the highlight of the year for many Pony Clubbers. At the end of every year, all clubs in the zone attend a weekend competition. During the two days there are events ranging from Hacking, Sporting and Showjumping.

Ribbons are awarded for for each age group in each different event, and at the end of the weekend, many trophies are awarded to riders and clubs that have been the most successful. However, the weekend is not merely a competition and is intended to promote friendships and understanding amongst all members.

Everyone is encouraged to camp overnight and join in group activities.

Riders wishing to enter MUST have ridden on the same horse at three Rally Days to be eligible.