

SHOWING the American Saddlebred

WHY SHOW

The Saddlebred is the World's Best "Show Horse" who loves nothing better than showing off in front of a crowd. The more cheers he gets, the better he loves it! Showing is also an ideal way in which to "showcase" the breed to the uninitiated and helps to draw new members and owners into the Association. In addition, by showing your Saddlebred (in any division) he or she is earning points towards their SASH Awards.

WHAT TO SHOW

There are a number of different divisions you can show your Saddlebred in:

- In Hand
- Saddle Seat (both 3 and 5 Gaited)
- Hunter
- Western
- as well as all the traditional classes you would see at your usual shows, plus endurance, dressage, driving etc.

IN HAND



For Saddlebreds in the UK these are the only classes where Pure and Partbreds are judged separately. As you will have read in our opening pages there are many partbred owners out there who are just as proud of their "American Saddlebred" ancestry as their purebred owners.

Love Is A Memory - courtesy of Franke Barker, Applewood Farm, California, USA.

In hand classes are open to Saddlebreds of any age and conformation and way of going are taken into consideration. Purebreds are shown with a full mane and tail and the traditional long shanked curb bit, while partbreds have the option of following either this American heritage, or their British heritage where they are shown plaited and braided. The choice is entirely up to the owner and is usually dependant on the amount of "Saddlebred type" the horse displays.

The ideal American Saddlebred is well proportioned and presents a beautiful overall picture. He should be in good flesh, with good muscle tone and exhibit a smooth, glossy coat. Masculinity in stallions and femininity in mares are important. The average height is 16hh and average weight 1,000lbs. Any colour is acceptable.

The handler trots their horse into the ring individually, placing themselves on the inside. Usually the judge asks for each entrant to trot in, one at a time down one long side - each horse will trot in and then line up nose to tail, while the next horse trots in. After all entrants are in the ring, the judge will call each horse forward individually to be inspected. They are "parked" out for the judge to look at and then walked away and finally trotted around the arena to the back of the line up. Each horse may also have a "tailer" - as the name suggests they run at the "tail" end of the horse and help to drive the horse forward and to engage.

Stallions may not be shown by exhibitors under 18 years of age. In hand classes are judged 50% on conformation and finish, 50% on way of going and natural action, except in colour classes (e.g. Golden/Pinto Saddlebreds In Hand) when colour counts for 25% of the total marks.

Turnout: Handlers should be neat and smart at all times. Jodphurs or trousers should be worn, accompanied by shirt and tie or smart barn tops. Jackets (blazer length), waistcats and formal shirts

and blouses may also be worn. If hats are worn they should be neat and tidy. Competitor numbers should be worn by the handler of the horse. Only one tailer is permitted per horse. Weanlings and yearlings should be shown in show halters. 2 year old and older horses must be shown bitted (snaffle or single curb). Horses may be shown with a roached (hogged) or full mane, with braids.

SADDLE SEAT

This is the "American" style of showing, with a cut back saddle, "saddle suit" and Derby hat and where the Saddlebred shows off his animation, style and presence.

Generally speaking, performance counts most in Open, Novice and Maiden classes, whilst manners count more in Ladies, Youth and Amateur classes. Way of going lies roughly in the middle! For example, **Amateur** classes are judged on manners, performance, presence, quality and conformation, while **Open** classes are judged on performance, quality, presence, conformation and manners.

Obviously there is some overlap and if walk, trot and canter is called for, they need to be shown, but it gives you an idea of why some horses will win one class and not another at the same show under the same judge. In America there are 3 major divisions in showing - Country Pleasure (which also includes hunter and western), Show Pleasure and Performance, each requiring a higher degree of animation, presence and performance than the one before. These different divisions will be covered in more detail in a future newsletter article, but briefly the most animated way of showing is the **Park Horse**, closely followed by the **Performance Horse**. Energy is directed towards animation and engagement. The **Pleasure Horse** and the **Country Pleasure Horse** are the categories the majority of Saddlebreds in the UK fit into. Both should be animated in their way of going, but more so for the Pleasure Horse. The Country Pleasure Horse is not allowed to wear weighted shoes or pads and so almost all our Saddlebreds that cross-compete (e.g. in both hunter and saddle seat) will be in this category. However, our classes are usually all run under "Pleasure" - we simply do not have enough Saddlebreds showing out there to split the classes ... YET!

Most of our classes are Open, which means that performance counts for the most. The saddle seat horse is very much the "peacock of the show ring" and should always possess that pizzazz and presence - the ideal saddle seat show horse will dominate the ring with his air of arrogance, stylish way of going and sheer performance during the class.

3-GAITED

What is a 3-Gaited horse? ... One that performs walk, trot and canter **BUT** he has to do it with style, animation and lots of presence. The 3-Gaited Saddlebred will be shown at an animated walk, show trot and canter.



Ref: : www.theperfecthorse.blogspot.com

Turnout: In America the 3-Gaited Saddlebred is shown with a trimmed mane and tail (hogged mane, tail trimmed), whilst in the UK, although this is perfectly acceptable we usually see him with a full mane and tail and braids are acceptable. A cut-back saddle is required and the horse should wear a double or a pelham bridle. Martingales are prohibited except where the schedule specifically states training tack may be worn or in Academy classes. Informal suits should be worn during the day and may also be worn in the evening or for championships and should be accompanied by a Derby hat. Formal suits should only be worn

in the evening or for championships. No boots (over-reach, brushing etc) may be worn in a 3-Gaited class.

5-GAITED

A 5-Gaited horse does all the above, as well as the 2 extra gaits unique to the Saddlebred - the Slow Gait and the Rack. The Slow gait is performed with great collection and animation whilst the Rack is a faster version with each foot hitting the ground at regular intervals. Both are lateral gaits. In addition the trot of the "gaited" horse should be stronger and bolder than his 3-Gaited counterpart.



Turnout: The 5-Gaited Saddlebred is shown with a full mane and tail and braids. A cut-back saddle is required and the horse should wear a double or a pelham bridle. Martingales are prohibited except where the schedule specifically states training tack may be worn or in Academy classes. Informal suits should be worn during the day and may also be worn in the evening or for championships and should be accompanied by a Derby hat. Formal suits should only be worn in the evening or for championships. Quarter-boots (trotting boots or over-reach boots) may be worn in a 5-Gaited class.

OTHER SADDLE SEAT CLASSES

In the UK the Saddlebred usually shares the show ring with the Morgan Horse. Both are shown in similar styles and classes. One of these classes is the **ROAD HACK** class, which the Saddlebred Horse has made his own. In this class each horse is required to perform at a walk (show walk, but must be a flat 4-beat walk), show trot (normal pleasure trot), a Road Trot (the fastest each horse can possibly trot whilst still maintaining form - form should not be sacrificed for speed), Canter (from a walk) and Hand Gallop. This is done on both reins. In addition the judge does call for a halt on the rail and asks everyone to walk off on a loose rein. If that's not all, in the line up each horse has to rein back. Anyone who has a Saddlebred will tell you how much they "love to trot" and they really can fly round the ring when "Road Trot" is called for. **Turnout** is either as for the 3-Gaited or the Hunter Saddlebred. Quarter-boots (trotting boots or over-reach boots) may be worn in a Road Hack class.

Another class is **EQUITATION**. This is what the English showing fraternity would call a "Best Rider" class, but that doesn't really do it justice. Yes the rider is being judged, but not only do they have to perform at walk, trot and canter both ways of the ring with everyone in at the same time, they also have to ride a set pattern individually, which is usually posted an hour before the class. And, they have to "show" their horse - the judges are looking for the same sort of performances from the horses that they would see in a normal showing class - just riding round for an accurate test will not win you an equitation class. Traditionally, in America, equitation classes are for youth riders (under 18). However they are just as popular with adults in the UK and frequently you will see both in the ring. Stallions may not be shown in equitation classes, but may be shown by Ladies and Amateurs (over 18 years of age) in all other performance classes.

Turnout is the same as for the 3-Gaited Saddlebred, except informal suits must be worn at all times. No boots (over-reach, brushing etc) may be worn in a Equitation class.

HUNTER

Obviously some Saddlebreds will be finer than others, some will be more up headed and some will show more animation. These types are ideally suited to the saddle seat classes in the show ring. Their counterparts at the opposite end of the spectrum are ideal "hunter" or western horses. Like the saddle seat classes, hunter Saddlebreds perform at walk, trot, and canter both ways of the ring. The judge can also call for extended trot and hand gallop. Hunter classes here encompass everything

from show hunter to show cob and riding horse to hack with everything in between - a Saddlebred will fall between the hack and the riding horse category, depending on the amount of bone he is carrying and the amount of knee action he has - however the classes are called HUNTER, so don't get put off by the class name.



Turnout: Hunter horses should wear plain bridles (no patent browband or caveson sets) and should not be shown with coloured braids in his mane. It is acceptable to have either a natural mane and tail (with a trimmed bridle path of course!); the mane in a running (or Arab) plait; or to pull his mane and tail and turn your hunter Saddlebred out the same as any regular "English" horse in the show ring. Riders should be presented in the usual attire for Riding Horse classes. No boots (over-reach, brushing etc) may be worn in a Hunter class, except if it has a jumping phase and then protective boots and martingales may be worn.

WESTERN

Try not to think of western classes run under WES rules (Western Equestrian Society) - yes plenty of UK Saddlebreds do show in "open" classes under WES rules and do very well. However, some of the terminology and class requirements are different to what is expected in a WES run class. In this case we will look at what would be required of you at an "American" run show. Like all the other classes the judge will ask for walk, trot and canter, except in the western classes these are called walk, jog and lope. The western Saddlebred will have a much lower head carriage than his "show horse" counterpart, but compared to horses in WES classes he will look a bit like a "Parade" horse. This is his heritage and WES rules are quite clear - horses should carry their head and neck in a natural position. For the Saddlebred this is going to be above the horizontal - even if he or she does nothing but western their whole life. Your Saddlebred is not a Quarter Horse (no offence to Quarter Horse readers out there), so please don't try to make him look like one!



Turnout: Western Horses should wear plain bridles (no patent browband). Nosebands are prohibited in western classes. He should be shown with a full mane and tail with no braids. Snaffle, bosal and hackamore bridles should be ridden two-handed and curb bridles should be ridden one-handed. The horse should wear a stock saddle and the competitor number should be pinned on the left side of the saddle blanket (both sides if given paired numbers). The rider should be neat and smart at all times, should wear a Stetson or BHS approved safety hat. Chaps are not mandatory, but jeans (if worn on their own) should be worn over boots. No boots (over-reach, brushing etc) may be worn in a western pleasure or horsemanship class.

All showing boils down to one thing

- you get out what you put in, in terms of training, practice and natural ability
- at the end of the day, it is one person's opinion (and they are usually unpaid, so a smile and a thank you works wonders, especially at the end of a long show)
- it's meant to be fun!

References:

Marilyn C. Childs. & Rick Wallen (1993). *Training Your Colt To Ride And Drive*. Trafalger Square Publishing, Vermont.

<http://picsdigger.com/keyword/spotted%20saddle%20horse/> (Accessed 12 July 2010).

<http://www.theperfecthorse.blogspot.com> (Accessed 12 July 2010).

Bibliography

USA-UK Newsletter No 7 (1996).

USA-UK Year Book 2010.

CLASS TERMINOLOGY

CLASS DEFINITION & CALLS	MEANING
Maiden	Not to have won a class in this division - once you win ANY class in this division you are out of Maiden classes. Maiden Horses can go in Maiden, Novice and Open classes.
Novice	Not to have won more than 2 classes in this division. Once you win a class in this division 3 times you are out of Novice. Novice Horses can go in Novice, Limit and Open classes.
Limit	Not to have won more than 6 classes in this division. Once you win a class in this division 6 times you are out of Limit. Limit horses can go in Limit and Open classes.
Open	Open to any horse and/or rider. Horse that have won more than 6 times in a division and are no longer eligible for Limit classes will need to enter the Open classes.
Amateur	Not open to professionals. All riders under 18 years of age are amateurs. Horses may be in professional training and can be schooled by professionals and riders can have lessons and attend clinics without it affecting their amateur status.
AOTS (Amateur Owned Trained & Shown)	As the class describes. Having lessons and/or attending clinics does not affect AOTS or Amateur status. Horses cannot be in professional training (for at least 6 months prior to the show) nor should the rider receive assistance by a professional. (Please note we do not consider it a breach of AOTS status if a someone helps with holding a horse, mounting / turning down jod cuffs etc. at a show). At all times SAFETY must come first and if that means a professional stepping in to help you prevent an accident, then we would not consider that a breach of AOTS status either.

Age and sex restricted classes	E.g. Under 12 years, Ladies only - specific to the description given.
Reverse	To change the rein and proceed in the opposite direction. The judge may also call for a change of pace at the same time e.g. "Reverse and Trot".
Pleasure Trot	Your horse's "normal" trot, with energy directed to collection, animation and elevation.
Show Trot	This is where the pleasure trot is to be opened up - think of a working trot going to a medium trot - the horse should still be collected and animated but show a greater length of stride.
Road Trot	This is a full extended trot - the fastest your horse can trot whilst still remaining in "form". That means he must remain collected on the bridle and he must still show elevation and animation. The judge is not looking for a horse that simply lengthens his whole frame, but one that collects his hindquarters under him more to lift and elevate the front end allowing full use of his shoulder and maximum length of stride. Form should never be sacrificed for speed.
Lope	Called for in a western class - a slow 3-beat canter.
Hand Gallop	To show lengthened strides in canter. In saddle seat classes the judge is looking for an extension of the the canter. In Hunter classes the rider can open the horse up more and depending on the room available ask for some "gallop" strides. The rider MUST remain in control at all times - it is not unknown for hand gallop to be called, then a canter and then halt!
Halt	To stop. Usually asked for on the rail (around the arena) and horses should stand square and attentive.
Overtaking	Overtaking should be done with consideration for other riders in the ring. Always overtake towards the inside of the ring and allow enough space for the horse you have overtaken before you go back to the rail. In hunter and saddle seat classes you may half circle across the arena to overtake, or ride a large circle to make more room. In western classes you should always parallel pass (no half or full circles).
"Rail"	If you are riding in a class and a rider shouts "rail" this usually means they have right of way. If you are already on the rail and another horse is cutting in front of you (maybe from overtaking) you can claim your space by calling "rail" - loud enough for other rider to hear.
"Line up"	The command for all entries in the ring to come into the centre and line up (where-ever you are directed by the ring steward - usually in front of the spectators). This is also your last chance to show the judge what he may have missed and so entries will always TROT around the rail for 1/2 to a full lap

	before coming into the line-up (not applicable in western classes, when they should come into the line-up by the shortest means possible). As the second rail work will be to the right, this last trot is always clockwise - competitors must NOT change direction.
--	---

Hopefully this has given you some insight into showing the American Saddlebred Horse in the UK - we hope to see you at future shows - either as a spectator or as a competitor.

In addition you are just as likely to see the Saddlebred Horse in Endurance Competitions, Dressage, Driving - in fact any discipline you can think of, the Saddlebred is capable of taking part in.

Remember that while your Saddlebred is out there competing he or she is earning points towards their CHAMPIONSHIP STATUS (don't forget to send your Hi-Point Books in at the end of each showing season). USA-UK run a number of awards that Saddlebreds can take part in. In addition the ASHA in America run Saddlebred Select Awards (for purebred horses) and Sport Horse Awards (for both pure and partbred Saddlebreds) - these are open to Saddlebreds the world over and are based on returned forms (simply get the show secretary to sign a pre-printed form) - why not have a go at that too?

If you have news of you and your Saddlebred out and about at shows, or if you have any questions regarding the showing divisions covered above please contact [USA-UK](#).

Show note

We are keen for members to express their support for horses in the ring, however please take care not to lean over the rail into the ring area to clap, bang the boards or wave any articles, this is against the rules.

Don't stop cheering but please make sure you express your enthusiasm outside the rail.

Also see [Show Rules](#)

ANY JUDGE or interested party who wishes to know more about the breed standards and rules of showing the American Saddlebred Show Horse are invited to contact USA-UK.

An electronic power-point presentation is available covering the major topics, plus leaflets covering general breed standards and class guides - these leaflets are FREE for any listed judge. In addition judges from other breed societies or associations who are interested in a more hands-on approach are welcome to contact USA-UK to join our visiting accredited judges in the ring. They will talk through their choices, what they see in the ring and the class calls and requirements - a great insight to familiarise yourself with the breed.

We are also happy to help to arrange for you to work alongside an accredited judge for you to gain USA-UK Panel Listing, or simply for a better insight into judging the American Saddlebred Horse.

CONTACTS:

USA-UK, 24 Coton Grove, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands, B90 1BS.
Email: Lynnusauk@aol.com