



UNITED  
SADDLEBRED  
ASSOCIATION

HOW, WHAT AND WHY TO DO THINGS WITH  
YOUR AMERICAN SADDLEBRED



The difference between Country Pleasure, Pleasure, Performance &  
park | Lynn Jarvis

## WHAT is COUNTRY PLEASURE, PLEASURE, PERFORMANCE & PARK? (May 2011)

These terms are used to describe divisions within the saddle seat style of showing (3 and or 5-Gaited), however all hunter and western divisions also fall within the Country Pleasure division. For the purpose of this article we will look specifically at the 3 and 5-Gaited saddle seat classes.

In America you are not allowed to switch divisions during a showing year (so if you show in Country Pleasure – which can be saddle seat, hunter or western, - you cannot then show in Pleasure, Performance or Park). Here in the UK we are less strict with our showing regime purely due to the number of shows offering these specialist classes and the number of Saddlebreds that are in this country. However, having said that, it is always best to find out what your horse is good at – there is no point trying to make your park horse flat walk for a country pleasure class or vice versa. Another rule that we do not follow is restriction of stallions in Amateur and Ladies classes – for the same reasons – however, stallions must be shown by adult competitors (not juniors).

To determine what category your horse may be best suited to show in, the easiest way to define it is by the amount of energy and animation your horse shows under saddle, especially in the trot. This can of course, be enhanced with training but the following descriptions will give you a guide of what division to start in with your Saddlebred.

The most animated way of showing is the **Park Horse**, closely followed by the **Performance Horse**. Energy is directed towards animation and engagement. Usually the forearm of the front leg is well above the horizontal when the horse is trotting. The Park horse is animated in the extreme with almost all his energy being directed towards elevation - park horses are shown at the Park Walk, where he should look like he is walking on hot coals - it is almost not a walk and many will perform a hot-footed walk that to all intents and purposes is a slow piaffe/passage type trot and then also “Park Trot” (see photo).



*The Park Horse – forearm well above horizontal.  
Photo by Blairshots.*

Even in canter the Park Horse will show great animation and at all times energy is directed towards animation and engagement. Although we do not see many Park Horses in the UK, we are fortunate to have at least one show that caters for the 3-Gaited Park Horse.

*The Performance Horse – forearm above horizontal.  
Photo by Emotion.*

It is rare that we see a true example of the Performance Division in the UK – currently we have no classes available for them, so they choose between the Park or the Pleasure classes.



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. A US rule that we do follow is that only amateur riders are allowed to compete in 3-G and 5-G Country Pleasure classes.



***The Country Pleasure Horse – forearm is below horizontal.  
Photo courtesy Winsdown Farms.***

The Pleasure Horse may show at either a hot-foot walk or a flat walk, whilst the Country Pleasure horse must always show a flat-foot walk. Other gaits include “trot” (and “extended trot” in Country Pleasure) and canter, as well as the slow gait and rack for 5-Gaited classes.

***The Pleasure Horse – with forearm level or just above horizontal. Photo courtesy Hickory Hill Farm.***

For more details on class specifications, judging criteria and what to wear, check out our Diary Dates & Showing Guide pages on our website: [www.american-saddlebred.co.uk](http://www.american-saddlebred.co.uk)



For those of you that want to show in BOTH American (saddle seat) and British (sport horse) classes it is worth reading up on the rules of the class you are showing in. For both BSPA and CHAPS classes, you can show saddle seat (with trimmed bridle path and braids) ONLY in ASB or American Breed classes. In all other classes your horse must be shown either natural (full mane and tail, no bridle path or legs trimmed), or trimmed and plaited (riding horse style “bobble” plaits) and you must be dressed accordingly (hacking or showing jacket). The same will apply in riding horse or similar classes at affiliated and county level shows – so, remember to check before you enter what is the required dress code and turnout for your horse.

#### References:

<http://www.american-saddlebred.co.uk/Diary%20dates%20&%20showing.htm> (accessed 6 July 2010).

#### Bibliography

[www.hickoryhillfarm.biz/king.htm](http://www.hickoryhillfarm.biz/king.htm) (accessed 6 July 2010).

<http://www.winsdown.com> (accessed 6 July 2010).