



THE SHOW HORSE

A G U I D E

Written by **Chelsea Ruxer**
Edited by the **UPHA Education Committee**
and **National Horseman Publishing, Inc.**

Contributing Photos by **National Horseman, Avis Girdler,**
Howard Schatzberg, Farrell Bacon, Mollie Mellinger,
Doug Shiflet, Ross Millin, Lori Ricigliano and **Rick Osteen**

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THE SHOW HORSE

A Basic Guide to Training, Care and Exhibition



History

For over 6,000 years, the horse has shaped civilizations around the globe, playing an important role in infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, and war. The horse remains an important part of our culture, from the iconic Mustangs of the American West to the Kentucky Derby and the Gold Cup. There is none so quintessentially American, though, as the show horse, both a product of our country's ingenuity and a symbol of the pride of its people.

Beauty, intelligence, and athleticism merge in the American Saddlebred, Morgan, Hackney, and National Show Horse breeds. These animals capture the hearts of young and old, amateurs and professionals alike. Today's show horse is diverse in heritage as well as in trade, a partner from the trails to the highest levels of competition.

The show horse's ancestors pulled carriages and worked farms, mined in the California Gold Rush, and carried generals into both the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The mid-19th century saw the cross-breeding of European Thoroughbreds with hearty North American breeds, including strains of Canadian Pacers. Meanwhile, Hackneys, the ultimate "driving machines" of England, were being imported to America by the boatload.

Concurrent with the development of mechanized transportation, civilization took an odd turn. Instead of destroying something which was no longer a necessity, it continued to cultivate the domestic horse. The resultant animal was not a mere piece of equipment, but a beautiful, sensitive creature with the stamina and athleticism to put on a show and the intelligence and personality to be a beloved family pet. While horses bred for racing boasted lengthy strides, what evolved into the modern show horse moved at a square, stately trot, less concerned with how quickly he reached his destination than with the manner in which he did so.



▲ The "horse America made," the modern American Saddlebred earns his reputation as the peacock of the show ring, photo by Avis Girdler



▲ A Morgan horse enjoys the spotlight.



▲ Wing Commander, one of the greatest five-gaited Saddlebreds of all time.

The creation of the “show horse” resulted in the first Saturday night horse shows in rural America. Farmers took pride in their mounts and met at county fairs to compete. As selective breeding for this aesthetic continued, the economics of the early 20th century allowed for the development of the professional horseman. Trainers, caretakers, and a growing band of specialists were able to devote their careers to the show horse industry, and breed registries were created to establish rules and judging standards.

Today, the United Professional Horsemen’s Association (UPHA), an organization of horse trainers, owners, breeders, and exhibitors, is dedicated to promoting and improving the show horse industry. To this end, it is committed to the following:

- Ensuring that the welfare of horses is the primary consideration in all activities.
- Continuing to work closely with show managers to see that the highest standards of safety and comfort are provided at all events.
- Ensuring that trainers, owners, and exhibitors are aware of their responsibilities and use proper care in training, handling, and shipping their horses.
- Educating trainers, owners, and exhibitors concerning the current rules of their sanctioning organizations and encouraging them to work within these regulations at all times.

This booklet is offered as a basic guide to the training, care, and exhibition of the show horse.

Training

Just as selective breeding produced the modern show horse, the show horse industry has created a unique breed of specialist to train him. Professional horsemen know one can't simply make a show horse; one can only let him be a show horse, trying to follow his talents in the right direction.

Though most show horses know humans from birth, horsemen are careful to begin steady work only once a horse is physically and mentally mature. This is a slow process, a subtle art in which the cruder techniques of horse "breaking" from stories of the American West have no place. A show horse doesn't need to simply execute his gaits—to do a job—but to do it with style and enthusiasm. A tired, rushed, or stressed horse is unlikely to have a successful career.

Young horses typically live in a herd, growing and becoming stronger before they are gradually introduced to a steady training program, usually in their 2-year-old year. They learn to respond to subtle pressure, progressing from a halter to a bit before mastering being guided in long lines and, later, ridden and driven with an exercise or "jog" cart.

Experienced horsemen are particularly sensitive to the needs of each horse and the pace at which he is comfortable progressing. They monitor the horse for signs of boredom, confusion, or mistrust and adjust their lessons accordingly.

As a horse grows and develops his repertoire of skills, it becomes more evident where he might best fit within the industry. The show horse industry offers a multitude of divisions to fit every style of show horse, and each division emphasizes different strengths. Horses indicate their preferred direction in a number of ways, and the horseman's job is to listen, evaluating the horse's carriage, way of moving and personality to discover his optimal discipline and give him the greatest chance of success.

Most show horses compete in several different divisions throughout their careers, allowing them to develop new specialties and accommodate physical and mental changes as they age. A horse with a strong training foundation may make these changes with ease.

Training programs are carefully designed to keep



PHOTO BY FARRELL BACON

▲ *A foal carries his tail up over his back as an expression of excitement.*

horses interested and engaged in their work. Within a typical work week, you might see the same horse being ridden, driven, lined, turned out and taken on a scenic trail ride. It's also not uncommon for show horses to practice training exercises which borrow from other disciplines. This cross-training not only helps develop the horse's physical fitness, just as with human athletes, but also prevents him from becoming bored with his exercise routine. Mature show horses typically take time off from their regular work programs in the off season and spend some months resting and being turned out in a pasture.

Some experienced owners choose to handle the training of their own show horses. These amateur owner/trainers may take advantage of the UPHA's "helping hand" program, which maintains a directory of professional horsemen willing to assist amateurs in their area.

The overall look of a show horse, as well as specific training equipment and goals, are unfamiliar to many equestrians from other disciplines, as well as lay people. Professional horsemen are glad to introduce newcomers to horses at various stages of development and to answer questions about practices or equipment which might be foreign in other equestrian endeavors.

Though the show horse breeds excel in a number of disciplines, both in the show ring and in such timed events as combined driving, cross country, endurance, and competitive trail, they typically sport a higher neck carriage and a "rounder" frame than, for instance, the American Quarter Horse or the average hunter-jumper. The difference in the physical build of the show horse breeds often necessitates specialized equipment to develop this horse's natural carriage and movement.

For example, in addition to a snaffle bit to cue the horse to turn left and right, many show horses learn to wear a curb bit. Differences in



The modern show horse may compete in a number of divisions throughout his career. ▲ The Saddlebred The Evangelist showed in-hand, and in Five-Gaited, Pleasure Driving and Western Country Pleasure throughout his long and successful career.

the physical design of the snaffle and curb bits encourage a natural flexion at the horse's poll, which helps balance these longer-necked horses between fore and hindquarters. Where the snaffle encourages a horse's head to come up in addition to controlling direction and speed, the curb allows for more subtle rein aids and cues the horse to carry his head on the vertical, much like in dressage, another discipline that utilizes a double bridle.

Because the show horse's energy is directed towards animation rather than efficiency, the movement of his legs is also different than that of a race or a work horse. This different movement requires equipment to help the horse build strength, flexibility, and cadence, some of which may seem unfamiliar, or even strange. You may see show horses wearing loose-fitting leather straps around the pastern. These comfortable straps help the horse to warm up by encouraging him to open his stride and engage his shoulders. Likewise, stretchers which are

two fleece-lined cuffs connected by a pliable length of rubber tubing, develop muscle tone and coordination by working much like our human resistance bands. This piece of equipment is used only for a brief period. All equipment should be fitted specifically for the stride of the individual horse and regularly inspected to ensure the horse's comfort.

Just as at the race track, blinkers are a familiar sight in the work arena. Blinkers consist of cups secured to a bridle or to a fabric face mask which prevent the horse from seeing behind him. This helps direct the horse's attention to where he is going and can keep him from becoming distracted or frightened by things around him. As a result, blinkers are common in busy warm-up areas and in other foreign, potentially stressful environments. They allow an unconfident horse to more slowly adapt to his surroundings. Across all breeds, most driving horses and ponies wear blinkers to thwart a natural fear among prey animals which is induced by seeing the vehicle "chasing" them.

Riders may carry hand whips, while those lining or driving may hold longer lash whips. In the case of the show horse, these serve a very different purpose—as a cue and a directional aid— than in other equine industries; the show horse seldom needs to expend his energy "faster." All breeds represented by the UPHA prohibit the aggressive use of whips, but this behavior would also be uncondusive to a successful show. The show horse or pony must be a willing, charismatic performer. A pinned ear, tail swish or other sign of resentment or discomfort will strongly detract from his performance. Thus, to a professional horseman, "whip" is a noun, not a verb.



▲ *An American Saddlebred exercising with blinkers, photo by Mollie Mellinger*

Show horses also frequently wear leg wraps or boots, which provide support and absorb impact in the case of accidental interference—one hoof, or leg, bumping another. Thanks to the attention placed on balanced shoeing and proper footing, interference-related injuries are rare, but many caretakers see the use of protective equipment as worthwhile insurance. The show horse or pony may also include in his wardrobe a stable sheet, fly protection for outdoors and various weights of warmer blankets for cooler weather.

Care

Anyone who has cared for a horse knows it takes a village. Newcomers to the industry are often surprised to meet the equine equivalents of podiatrists, nutritionists, doctors, and dentists who work together to keep horses healthy and happy. Some horses even have regular appointments with chiropractors and massage therapists.

Arguably the most important member of the show horse's team is his caretaker, a person whose primary responsibility is to oversee the daily care of a string of show horses. Caretakers work hard to keep their horses comfortable both at home and on the road, and many stables install systems for fly control, heating, and cooling, while show horses travel in the warmer months with their own electric fans. Caretakers play an important role in maintaining the overall health of the horse and advising other members of his team of any concerns. From preparing the horse to work, to grooming, to cool down, the caretaker is usually the individual who spends the most time with the horse, and so his role is vital. In addition to increasing circulation, regular grooming sessions allow caretakers to check their horses for signs of injury or inflammation. Since caretakers spend the most time with their horses, they are best able to monitor food and water intake and changes in behavior. Whatever the cause, caretakers are the

first to know when a horse isn't feeling his best, and they are often the first to know how to remedy the situation. It's for this reason the UPHA has a dedicated Caretaker Hall of Fame.

Beyond day to day care from their caretakers, show horses receive regular visits from a host of professionals. In addition to monitoring overall health and advising on nutritional needs, equine veterinarians are responsible for keeping horses properly vaccinated and overseeing a regular deworming protocol like those administered to cats and dogs. Licensed shows secure veterinarians to provide care in case of the injury or illness of its competitors. However, well-designed show grounds and advances in equine transportation make



A horse enjoys a session with an equine massage therapist ▲



PHOTO BY FARRELL BACON

▲ *The show horse breeds are naturally inquisitive. Their interest in human interaction is evident at an early age.*

emergencies of this nature rare. Horses are carefully secured in trailers designed to maintain their balance and safety, and state of the art shock absorption systems help prevent jostling in transport.

Dental specialists make visits to “float” horses’ teeth, removing sharper edges which might otherwise irritate the insides of the cheek or make chewing difficult. Because horses’ teeth, unlike human teeth, continue to grow throughout their lifespan, these visits are necessary.

Thanks to advancements in equine nutrition, show horses and ponies benefit from a range of dietary options. There are ample sources of forage and a number of grain and pelleted feeds available for the creation of custom equine dietary programs. Additionally, high quality supplements make it easy to provide horses with enhanced immunity, joint, cardiovascular, digestive, weight, and even mood support. You might be surprised to find show horses and ponies taking supplements similar to your own.

Many newcomers are impressed not just by the sleek coats of show horses and ponies, but by their full, beautiful tails. On the show horse, the tail is not merely a fly-swatting apparatus, but a product of extensive care and a point of pride on the part

his caretakers. Tail care has become an art of its own. Since brushing can result in hair loss, tails are picked apart one piece at a time. They are often kept braided at home and are painstakingly styled before the horse enters the show ring.

The show horse breeds naturally carry their tails high over their backs, most evident outside of the show ring as an expression of their excitement when loose in the field. The high carriage of the tail complements the appearance of the show horse by balancing the extended length of the neck and exemplifying the natural way of moving when confident and comfortable. To further enhance the horse’s tail carriage, a veterinarian may release tight muscles at the base of the tail to increase its range of motion. The same result may be achieved by gentle stretching, similar to that of a gymnast learning to do a backbend. In either case, the horse maintains the ability to use his tail normally, for such purposes as swishing flies.

In many divisions, Saddlebreds and Hackneys have the option to wear their tails “up” over their backs, secured with a brace or a string tie. Horses showing in these divisions often wear a soft, loose-fitting type of harness for a period of time to gently lift the tail as they prepare for a show.

Shoeing

Whereas a horse's hooves would naturally break off unevenly as they grew, regular trimming allows farriers to adjust to the angle and length of the hoof. At least while they are being shown or are participating in a regular exercise program, most show horses and ponies are outfitted with shoes. Shoes provide support, as well as protection from rough surfaces.

Horse shoeing is a lot like the creation of custom orthotics for human athletes; skilled farriers provide support where the horse needs it and correct any defects which might cause discomfort, carefully evaluating each horse's way of moving and crafting shoes to fit his needs. Many animated movers wear a leather or a rubber pad between the hoof and the shoe to protect the sole.

These pads are sometimes confused by newcomers with the larger and more cumbersome packages seen in other arenas, which cause an exaggerated movement of the front legs. In the breeds represented by the UPHA, this laboring action is highly undesirable; the show horse or pony's motion should be graceful and smooth, never jerky. Any defect of gait or hint of unsoundness is strongly penalized but, more importantly, an uncomfortable horse will be a poor performer.

Caretakers, farriers, and other specialists take great pride in their art and are always happy to answer questions and introduce newcomers to their equine charges.



The show horse boasts competitive longevity. Saddlebred Hank Heiron won his first World's Championship at age 3 and his most recent at 22. He is pictured here carrying young riders to World's titles 11 year apart. ▲

Exhibition

With their square, balanced trot, willing attitude and charismatic presence, the show horse excels in many different divisions and even in multiple disciplines. Today's show horse has more performance career options than ever before. The show horse breeds are also welcome competitors at open shows, where they exhibit in a number of classes open to all breeds. While these breeds share many traits in common, they each have unique characteristics, and various divisions have been developed to put these on display.

Because they are descended in part from pacing breeds, some American Saddlebreds show an early propensity towards lateral movement and develop two additional four-beat gaits, the slow gait and the rack, to become "five-gaited." At the

time "The Show Horse" was originally released, American Saddlebreds had well-established Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited, and Fine Harness divisions. Today, Saddlebreds also compete in Park, Show Pleasure, and Country Pleasure divisions, as well as in Western, Hunter, and Dressage. These divisions show the breed's many strengths—the refinement of the Three-Gaited horse, the bold-moving excitement of the Five-Gaited horse, and the comfortable, ground-covering action exhibited in the Pleasure divisions, in which manners are paramount. Increasingly popular Western Country Pleasure and Hunter Country Pleasure classes, as well as a Saddlebred division for Dressage Suitability, demonstrate the remarkable versatility of the "peacock of the show ring."



▲ The exciting five-gaited American Saddlebred

A similar range of options is available to the beautiful and athletic Morgan, known for their people-loving attitude as "the breed that chooses you." Like Saddlebreds, Morgans compete in a number of driving divisions. They make bold, expressive rides in Park classes and show their smooth, easy way of moving in their Pleasure and Classic Pleasure divisions. Appreciated for their stamina and willingness to please, Morgans demonstrate their versatility in Western Pleasure, Western Dressage, Hunter Pleasure, Working Hunter, and Trail classes.

Thanks to their animation, vigor and expressive attitude, Hackneys are known as the “aristocrats of the show ring.” Hackney Horses are often exhibited in driving divisions ranging from singles in phaetons to elegant teams of four pulling bright road coaches. Hackneys also have a Pleasure division and frequently compete in-hand. In addition, the Pleasure Hackney Horse may be shown in Park, Sport, or Country divisions under saddle. These classes show the Hackney’s stylish suitability as a riding horse.

A smaller, power-packed version of the Hackney Horse, the Hackney Pony is a versatile show ring competitor. Exhibitors drive the dynamic, high-stepping “cob tail” Hackney Pony—whose tail hair is cropped to a blunt bob—or long-tailed Harness Pony in four-wheeled viceroys. The Hackney Pony is a delight to drive and also competes in Show and Country Pleasure Driving divisions. Roadster classes borrow from the style of American harness racers, and Hackney Ponies have a Roadster division of their own. In these exciting classes, drivers or juvenile riders wear racing silks and exhibit their athletic ponies at three distinct speeds. There are also “saddle type” and “Morgan type” Roadster Horse classes for the other show horse breeds, the most common competitors being Standardbreds, Dutch Harness Horses, and Morgans.

The National Show Horse is a relatively new breed comprised of American Saddlebred-Arabian crosses. Combining the attributes of these two breeds produced an athletic horse with size, beauty, and refinement. The National Show Horse exhibits in Three-Gaited, Fine Harness, English Pleasure and Country Pleasure, both under saddle and in harness, and can even be Five-Gaited. National Show Horses are also versatile in Side Saddle classes and in the English Show Hack, Hunter Pleasure, and Western Pleasure divisions.



The stylish and personable Hackney Pony has become a favorite show ring competitor. ▲

In addition to the performance divisions, the modern show horse has yet another option for a show ring career in Equitation. This form-to-function division emphasizes the rider’s horsemanship and posture. Though showmanship is paramount in the Equitation division, it’s clear some horses excel at showing riders at their best. These focused, agile horses are smooth-riding and rise to the challenge of competitive Equitation classes, performing intricate patterns with ease. The UPHA Challenge Cup program encourages Saddle Seat Equitation competition throughout the nation and offers National Championships for the Saddlebred, Morgan, Arabian and Half-Arabian, and National Show Horse breeds.

Appreciation of the show horse breeds does not end with their show ring retirement. Thanks to a healthy aging population, there are several centers for equine retirement throughout the United States. Though some owners appreciate the convenience of a retirement operation, others prefer to keep their horses at home or choose to breed or trail ride their former competitive partners. Many retired show horses find new careers giving lessons or participating in therapeutic programs, where they can remain active and engaged with the people who care for them.

Getting Involved

Saddlebreds, Morgans, Hackneys, and National Show Horses stand out among modern horse breeds for their accessibility to the general public; the show horse is a horse for everyone, not just for professionals. Ever-expanding opportunities for amateur involvement at various levels of time and financial commitment are allowing these extraordinary animals to reach more people, in more ways, than ever before.

While some owners enjoy the process of watching young horses develop under the guidance of a trainer, many eventually want to take the reins themselves. Many training barns specialize in matching horses to riders or drivers and preparing them to work as teams. These professionals prioritize finding a good “fit,” a horse suitable both for the desired division and the individual needs of the owner. They evaluate how a horse’s size, shape and way of moving will affect his partner, and vice versa.

Many stables also offer ways for riders to participate without owning their own horses. There is an extensive network of Academy programs and shows across the United States. Here, riders of all ages and ability levels may compete against one another with horses who make their careers teaching lessons. Some operations offer horses for lease or make it possible

for riders to compete in non-Academy shows on suitable school horses.

The sensitive and intelligent nature of the show horse breeds also makes them desirable in therapeutic settings or as partners for riders or drivers with special needs. There are a growing number of hippotherapy centers across the United States, as well as teachers who utilize different communication methods, adaptive equipment and other means to allow more people to experience



▲ Thanks to an extensive network of Academy shows, riders may compete without the need for ownership.

the physical and emotional benefits of equine activities. Many horse shows have established classes for this purpose, including the UPHA Exceptional Challenge Cup, which gives riders with physical and cognitive challenges the opportunity to compete at the national level.

For those who prefer to enjoy horses and ponies from the rail, the show horse industry is full of opportunities for involvement, entertainment, and philanthropy. Many horse shows benefit local charities, often fundraising through lively social events. The industry is also committed to promoting education and community service. Riders participating in the UPHA's Ribbons of Service program raise money for St. Jude Children's Hospital and perform community service to compete for scholarships. The UPHA and the breed organizations it serves also offer funds to serve horsemen in times of emergency or to care for unwanted horses and ponies.

Newcomers are often surprised at the level of camaraderie among horse trainers, caretakers, and exhibitors and are impressed by their passion for giving back both to the show horse and to their communities.



▲ Young exhibitors engage in community service through the UPHA's Ribbons of Service program.

Whether your interest is in enjoying a good horse show or in winning it, getting involved with the show horse breeds is a uniquely rewarding experience. Please consult the following organizations to learn more about horse shows, training stables, and lesson programs near you.

THE UNITED PROFESSIONAL HORSEMAN'S ASSOCIATION

Lexington, KY
(859) 231-5070
uphaonline.com

THE UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION

Lexington, KY and Gladstone, NJ
(859) 258-2472
usef.org

THE AMERICAN MORGAN HORSE ASSOCIATION

Shelburne, VT
(802) 985-4944
morganhorse.com

THE AMERICAN ROAD HORSE AND PONY ASSOCIATION

Duluth, GA
(678) 296-7742
americanroadhorsepony.com

THE AMERICAN SADDLEBRED HORSE ASSOCIATION

Lexington, KY
(859) 259-2742
asha.net

THE AMERICAN HACKNEY HORSE SOCIETY

Lexington, KY
(859) 255-8694
ahhscsl@qx.net

THE NATIONAL SHOW HORSE REGISTRY

Lewisburg, OH
(937) 962-4336
nshregistry.org

THE AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL

Washington, DC
(202) 296-403
horsecouncil.org

A Glossary Of The Show Horse

Learning about the horse business can sometimes feel like learning a new language, and it often takes years to fully grasp the ins and outs of the horse show world.

COLOR /'kɒlər/ n.

Each of these show breeds come in a variety of colors. Morgans are most frequently bay, with few markings, but do come in many other colors. Hackneys can be black, bay or chestnut. Saddlebreds come in a much broader color range, though chestnut is most common. There are also names for the different white markings a horse has on its legs and face.

Star: White hair of varied sizes on the forehead.

Blaze: a wide strip of white hair from the forehead to the nostril.

Stripe: The same as a blaze but narrow.

Snip: white hair that appears on the nose.

Stockings: white from the hoof to the bottom of the knee and hock.

Sock: white from hoof to ankle and slightly above.

Pastern: white from hoof to just below the ankle.

GAITS /gāts/ n.

The different patterns of movement that horses exhibit are called “gaits.” In most classes at a horse show, horses enter at the trot or jog. Next, they are asked to walk, then canter or lope. They are then called to reverse and perform the same gaits in the opposite direction. Certain disciplines call for extra gaits or omit certain gaits; for example, horses only trot and walk in a Country Pleasure Driving class. For further information on the various divisions at the horse show, see “Horse Show Divisions.”

Walk: a slow, four-beat gait that is often overlooked but just as important as any of the others. In addition to serving as preparation for the other gaits, the walk can emphasize manners. Depending on the division, this gait can be performed at a flat or animated walk.

Trot: a two-beat gait, the four-cornered trot is the only gait that is exhibited by all divisions. Riders accommodate the motion by posting, except at the jog in the Western division.

Canter: a three-beat gait that has a rolling appearance. In the show ring, a judging requirement is to be cantering on the correct lead. This is when the foreleg toward the inside of the circle is ahead of the other.

Slow gait: a four-beat gait performed by the five-gaited American Saddlebred. The weight of the horse is mostly on the hindquarters, giving the front end an elevated appearance.

Rack: a much faster, exciting four-beat gait performed after the slow gait by the five-gaited American Saddlebred. It is more than a fast slow gait, as the horse’s weight distribution is even at the rack, allowing the horse to move forward.

TACK /tak/ n.

The pieces of equipment you see on a horse are collectively known as “tack,” and they serve different purposes.

Bell Boots: rubber footwear worn around the horse’s front hooves to protect from injury caused by the back hooves. Usually used only during exercise, but may be worn in certain classes.

Bit: a piece of equipment that lays across the horse’s tongue and is part of the bridle. The rider controls the horse’s speed and direction by applying gentle pressure to the bit via the reins.

Blanket: a “coat” shaped to fit a horse from its chest to its rump. Unlike the cooler, the blanket is fitted and attaches with straps that allow the horse to move freely and wear the blanket unattended. A hood, which is fitted to the face and neck, may also be worn.

Breastcollar: leather straps that run across the horse’s chest and between the front legs and attach to the saddle. The breastcollar is used to keep the saddle from shifting. It is not worn in saddle seat events, but is often seen in Parade classes.

Bridle: similar in appearance to the halter, it is worn on the horse’s head and is used to control the horse while riding. There are many different styles, which coordinate with the discipline in which they are used.

Cooler: a large square piece of fabric—usually wool—that is draped over the neck and body of a horse that is sweaty or has been bathed. It helps the horse dry at a safe rate and prevents its temperature from dropping too quickly.

Girth or Cinch: a piece of equipment that extends under the horse’s belly to attach the saddle to the horse. The girth is used in English disciplines, while the cinch is used in Western.

Hackamore/bosal: a type of bridle that has no bit; you most often see these in Western classes for young horses, as they are often used in training.

Halter: straps of leather or nylon that wrap loosely around the horse’s face and allow the horse to be led or held from the ground using an attached lead rope.

Harness: the collective name for the pieces of tack used to control a horse attached to a driving cart.

Martingale: a piece of tack that keeps the horse from raising its head higher than desired. It looks similar to a breastcollar, but has pieces that attach to the horse’s reins. There are several styles, each of which serve specialized purposes.

Polos: protective fabric wrapped around the horse’s lower legs. These are usually removed before the horse enters the show ring, but may be worn in working Western and sport horse classes.

Quarter boots: protective leather footwear worn by five-gaited and driving horses to protect the front heels of the horse from the back hooves.

Reins: straps that attach to the bit and run to the rider’s hand, used to direct the horse.

Saddle: the piece of tack on which the rider sits. Each discipline has its own style.

Stirrups: the part of the saddle where the rider places his or her feet. Also called “irons” in English disciplines.

Tail bag: a special cloth bag that protects the horse’s tail. In the horse show world, a horse’s tail can be precious. Long, full tails are desirable, so tails are often braided up and put into tail bags. The tail bag is removed when the tail is to be washed or when the horse shows.

HORSE SHOW DIVISIONS

SADDLEBRED PERFORMANCE /saddl·bred·pərfōrməns / n.

Five-Gaited. The five-gaited show horse is considered by some the epitome of the breed. Fiery and strong, these horses perform all five gaits seen in the Saddlebred show ring: walk, trot, slow gait, rack and canter. They show with a full mane and elevated tail.

Three-Gaited. These horses show only at the walk, trot and canter. Movement and quality are very important in this division. Three-gaited horses are particularly known for their elegant head placement, which is emphasized because they show with shaved—also called roached—manes.

Fine Harness. Fine harness horses show attached to an elegant, four-wheeled cart. They perform at a high-stepping trot and a “show walk,” preferably with a good amount of suspension. Drivers in this division often wear their best finery.

Park. Horses that show in the Park division are highly animated and athletic. They have alert expressions and exaggerated motion. Showing at a walk, trot and canter, they are judged primarily on their quality, movement and exciting performance. Unlike three-gaited horses, park horses show with a full mane.

Five-Gaited Pleasure. Horses in this division show all five gaits, but there is more emphasis on manners. The horses should look like a “pleasure” to ride. Most of the Pleasure divisions are open only to amateur and junior exhibitor riders (not professional trainers).

Three-Gaited Pleasure. Similar to Park, horses that show in the Three-Gaited Pleasure division are expected to be showy. However, there is more emphasis on horses having good manners in this saddle seat class; the horses should look comfortable to ride and should perform a flat walk (not jogging or bouncing). They have a full manes and tails.

Park Pleasure. Often a class for young horses, this is the only Pleasure class open to professionals. The horses can be a little fierier, like a Park horse, but they are still expected to have manners and perform a calm, flat walk and controlled canter.

Pleasure Driving. Pleasure driving horses perform pulling a two-wheeled cart. Emphasis is again on manners. Movement should be ground-covering and even. They are shown at two speeds of the trot and flat walk.

Country Pleasure. Very similar to Three-Gaited Pleasure, but even more emphasis is placed on the horse looking comfortable to ride. In addition to a true flat walk, horses will be asked to halt and stand quietly on the rail. The country pleasure horse is not allowed to wear leather pads, and the frog of the foot should be visible. The horse should appear perfectly obedient.

Country Pleasure Driving. With a similar emphasis on comfort and natural movement, Country Pleasure Driving is like the Country Pleasure division, except the horse is driven rather than ridden, and it does not perform at a canter.

Western Country Pleasure. Horses in this division are shown in Western attire. They move at a much slower pace than their saddle seat counterparts, showing at a jog and lope rather than trot and canter. The jog and lope should be slow and relaxed, but correct, and the horse should be mannered and responsive.

Hunter Country Pleasure. These horses demonstrate free, ground-covering movement and are representative of horses that could be ridden on the hunt. They carry their heads in a lower position than saddle seat horses. The horse wears hunter-type English tack.

In-Hand/Futurity. In the Saddlebred world, these classes are most often meant to show off young horses. Horses are led into the arena rather than ridden, and they are judged on their conformation (the way they are put together) and their natural movement. The goal is to present an ideal representation of the breed.

Parade Horse. In the Parade division, which has witnessed a comeback in recent years, horses wear elaborate silver Western-type tack. The horses are decorated with colorful ribbons and

AS EASY AS WGC

You will often see a combination of letters in front of or at the end of a horse’s show name. Sometimes, these letters indicate who bred the horse. However, there are certain letters that can be earned through the horse’s accomplishments in the show ring. The American Saddlebred Horse Association (ASHA), the American Morgan Horse Association (AMHA) and the American Hackney Horse Society (AHHS) all recognize top-performing show horses and ponies through special point programs. Saddlebred and Hackney designations will always be located at the beginning of a name, while Morgan designations will always be located at the end of the name. Furthermore, Saddlebreds and Hackneys can earn a few other designations through participation in the World’s Championship Horse Show, the most prestigious event in the country for both breeds.

SADDLEBRED & HACKNEY

“CH” Champion

15 points *(for Saddlebred or Hackney Horse)*

“CH” Champion

60 points *(for Hackney Pony)*

“CH-EQ” Champion-Equitation

15 points *(or winning the Equitation Triple Crown; points must be earned in an Equitation class)*

“WC” World’s Champion

(first place in a qualifying class at the World’s Championship Horse Show)

“WCC” World’s Champion of Champions

(first place in a championship class at the World’s Championship Horse Show)

“WGC” World’s Grand Champion

(first place in one of the seven Grand Championships at the World’s Championship Horse Show: Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited, Fine Harness, Roadster Pony, Hackney Pony, Harness Pony and Roadster to Bike)

“RWC” Reserve World’s Champion

(second place in a qualifying class at the World’s Championship Horse Show)

“RWCC” Reserve World’s Champion of Champions

(second place in a championship class at the World’s Championship Horse Show)

“RWGC” Reserve World’s Grand Champion

(second place in one of the seven Grand Championships at the World’s Championship Horse Show: Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited, Fine Harness, Roadster Pony, Hackney Pony, Harness Pony and Roadster to Bike)

MORGAN

“CH” Champion

15 points

“GCH” Grand Champion

30 points

You may occasionally see an American Saddlebred mare with a (BHF) at the end of her name. This horse is a member of the Broodmare Hall of Fame and has been recognized for producing winning offspring.

flowers, and riders usually wear a coordinating outfit. Some shows do offer Parade classes for Morgan horses as well.

ROAD HORSE /rōd·hōrs/ n.

Roadster to Bike. Road horses have a need for speed. They show at the jog, road gait and “trot at speed.” Breaking from the trot is penalized, and there should be a clear distinction between speeds. In the bike class, horses are attached to a two-wheeled racing cart, and the drivers wear racing silks.

Roadster to Wagon. This class runs the same way as the Bike class, but instead, horses are attached to a large, four-wheeled buggy. The driver's attire is also more formal in this division, and the horses are often larger because they pull a heavier cart.

Roadster Under Saddle. This class runs the same way as the other Road Horse classes, but the entries are ridden under saddle rather than driven. Riders are dressed in racing silks.

HACKNEY PONY /'hæknē·'pōnē/ n.

Roadster Pony. Like the road horse, the roadster pony is a speedster. The class is exactly the same as the Roadster to Bike class, but on a smaller scale, as it is Hackney Ponies attached to these bikes.

Roadster Pony Under Saddle. The same as the Roadster Pony class, but ponies are ridden under saddle. These classes are open to junior exhibitors only.

Hackney Pony. Ponies in this class are driven attached to a fancy four-wheeled cart called a viceroy. They have exaggerated action and are only shown at a park trot and a slightly faster trot, which the announcer will call for by saying, "Show your pony." In the Hackney Pony class, the ponies wear braided manes and cob tails (the tail hair is cut short).

Harness Pony. Ponies shown in this class are smaller than those in the Hackney Pony class—they may not exceed 50 inches to the withers (where the neck meets the back). They show with full manes and full, elevated tails and resemble miniature versions of a Saddlebred fine harness horse.

Hackney Pleasure Driving. These ponies also show with full manes and tails, but the tail is left natural, and the motion is much less extreme. Like Saddlebred pleasure horses, emphasis is on manners and movement.

RIBBONS DECODED

Blue: first place, champion

Red: second place, reserve

Yellow: third place

White: fourth place

Pink: fifth place

Green: sixth place

Purple: seventh place

Brown: eighth place

Gray: ninth place

(rarely awarded)

Light Blue: tenth place

(rarely awarded)

Blue, red and yellow tri-color ribbon:
first place in a championship

Red, yellow and white tri-color ribbon:
second place in a championship

DIVISIONS DECODED

Open: open to any rider, including professional trainers; can also mean open to any breed of horse

Amateur: open to non-professional riders only

Junior Exhibitor: open to riders aged 17 and under

Classes may also be further divided by horse gender, horse age or rider age at larger shows.

MORGAN PERFORMANCE /'môrgən·pər'fôrməns/ n.

Park and Park Harness. The Morgan showing in the Park division is expected to display brilliance and animation, while remaining balanced. The horse should also display physical traits associated with the Morgan horse (called "type"). There are both under saddle and harness classes in the Park division.

English Pleasure and Pleasure Driving. While still all show horse, high motion is not as prominent in the English pleasure horse. These horses are judged on their collected, beautiful movement and willing attitude. Like the pleasure horses in the Saddlebred divisions, they should look willing and enjoyable to ride or drive.

Classic Pleasure and Classic Pleasure Driving. Extreme animation is not desirable in the Classic Pleasure division. Instead, these horses should display a calm attitude, even and controlled movement and light contact on the bit. Nothing should look forced. They should be very willing and obedient, whether shown under saddle or in harness.

Western Pleasure. The ideal Western pleasure Morgan presents with a balanced body and movement. The neck is carried in a natural position, which may vary from horse to horse but is generally lower than a saddle seat-type mount. These horses show at a slow, collected jog and lope. Gaits should be straight and correct.

Hunter Pleasure. Shown in hunter attire, these horses should be well-mannered with light contact on the bit. The head carriage is lower in this division than the others, and the horse should move in easy, ground-covering gaits.

In-Hand. There are In-Hand classes for Morgans of all ages. Like with any breed, this class is judged against a standard of ideal conformation and movement. Temperament and suitability for breeding are also considered.

Morgan Roadster. This class runs just like the Roadster to Bike class, but it is open only to Morgan horses. Morgans may also show in open Roadster classes at shows with other breeds.

Road Hack. The road hack horse is meant to mimic the practical mount used to get from place to place in a time before cars. Horses should be swift and responsive to changes in speed. At any point during the class, the judge(s) may call for a "halt and walk off on a loose rein." They will also be required to move into a hand gallop, which has a longer stride than the canter. You may see both saddle seat and hunter attire in these classes.

EQUITATION /ekwi'tayshuhn/ n.

Equitation. Equitation is unique in that the focus of this division is on the rider, rather than the horse. Riders must maintain the ideal position while showing their horse to the best of its ability. In some classes, riders will be asked to perform additional tests, called pattern work, to further evaluate the rider's skill at directing their horse through a series of short elements. Equitation can be performed in a variety of seats (i.e. saddle seat, Western seat, hunter seat).

Saddle Seat Equitation. Found in both Morgan and Saddlebred breeds. While the mount is not the focus, the riders in this division ride horses that most resemble the English pleasure Morgan or a three-gaited American Saddlebred. Saddlebreds in this division may show with a trimmed mane.

Pleasure Equitation. Usually Saddlebreds only. Form is the emphasis in this division. The horses have full manes and natural tails, and like in Three-Gaited Pleasure classes, the horses will be expected to flat walk and display impeccable manners.

Classic Equitation. For Morgans only. This would be most akin to the Saddlebred Pleasure Equitation division. The horses should display the manners and movement appropriate for a classic pleasure performance horse.

Walk-and-Trot Equitation. A division reserved for younger riders or beginners, entries in this class do not canter; they only show at a walk and trot (or walk and jog in the case of Western classes).

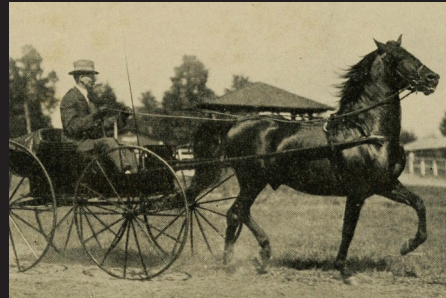


PHOTO BY SARAH BENNETT