

JUDGES AND COMPETITORS GUIDE TO THE SHOW HUNTER

1. TYPE

A Show Hunter horse does not have to be of any specific breeding.

Successful Show Hunters have included, and are not limited to, blends of:

Thoroughbred, Irish Draught, Native Ponies (UK),
Australian/New Zealand bred ponies, Welsh Cob,
Warmblood and Arabian blood.

The Show Hunter most importantly is a quality, upstanding well schooled, well mannered workmanlike horse carrying more bone and substance than the Show Hack. A good Show Hunter is sound in both leg and wind. The Show Hunter is a weight carrying animal capable of carrying his rider comfortably over varying terrain with ease and safety over a period of time with controlled, forward energy and strong, easy paces without appearing mechanical or dull. The picture should be one of strength, quality and presence with therefore visual appeal to the judge and spectator.



2. CONFORMATION

Before you can evaluate a Show Hunter, one must become familiar with the standards and characteristics so important within the type of horse which can then appropriately be termed a Show Hunter.

ALWAYS use common sense whilst keeping in mind the key attributes that constitute a quality type of Show Hunter when judging or choosing a horse to compete.

In addition to the general criteria of good conformation required in *any* show animal, look for;

- Straight, correctly set legs, front and rear view;

- Short, wide cannon bones with clean, well developed tendons;
- Large, clean, flat joints (especially knees, hocks and fetlock joints);
- Well shaped feet which are in proportion to the horse;
- Short, broad and well muscled back and loins;
- A hunter horse over 15hh should carry between 8-9 inches of bone and a Pony Hunter or Galloway should carry the general attributes of a Show Hunter as described throughout, with the bone being commensurate to the size of the animal;
- Splints should not be discriminated against as long as they do not appear to cause unsoundness;
- Scars are not the fault of the horse and, providing that they do not impinge on the movement of the animal, no penalty should be imposed;

3. MOVEMENT, PACES AND MANNERS

- A Show Hunter's movement should be ground covering whilst being straight, careful and slightly plainer than the extravagant movement of a Show Hack, whilst being smooth, effortless, sweeping, elevated and clean.
- Extreme, flashy movement is not acceptable in the Show Hunter nor is short, choppy movement or high knee action.
- A gallop is expected of Show Hunters and a gallop should always form part of the workout **PROVIDING** Show Societies allocate adequate space and that the grounds are not dangerous or wet.
- A true gallop should be executed - flat strap and out of control is not correct. The gallop should be immediate without any sign of laziness with the horse covering the ground in big, easy strides. (A good way to note the difference between correct and an incorrect gallop is that with an incorrect gallop, the faster that the horse travels the shorter the stride becomes. A correct gallop will display four beats and will be a much longer stride). The horse should finish the gallop calmly and without pulling.
- Rather than requesting a lengthened trot (a big, toe flicking extension should not win a hunt class) a judge may ask for a strong trot with some lengthening to be shown.
- Manners are extremely important in the Show Hunter but it is important that the Show Hunter does not appear robotic.
- Deliberate disobediences such as napping, bucking, rearing or refusing to walk or stand in the workout or line up should be penalised.

- Commonsense must be applied so that small inconsistencies may be forgiven – ie: a horse which changes leg to negotiate slippery ground (as long as this is rectified quickly) is not displaying poor manners.

4. COMMON MISTAKES

******JUDGES SHOULD NOT REWARD FAILED HACKS OR HORSES NOT DISPLAYING TRUE SHOW HUNTER TYPE******

- A horse which is substantial in build and which may also display the attributes in his body which we require in a Show Hunter, yet is underpinned with fine, petite bone is **not** suitable to be called a Show Hunter.
- A horse which has been overfed and is overweight either marginally or grossly in an attempt to imitate a substantial body, yet is underpinned with fine, petite bone, is **not** suitable to be termed a Show Hunter.
- A horse which carries the attributes required in substance and bone, yet is poorly mannered and unable to perform calmly and obediently will **not** be rewarded as a Show Hunter.
- A horse which carries the attributes required in substance and bone but however has flashy, eye catching movement which is correct for a Show HACK is **not** suitable to be termed a Show Hunter.
- Although show hunters are heavier horses care should also be taken that a horse is not too heavy or too coarse in its bone, or has heavy, plodding movement which would impede its versatility and ability to cover ground. Such horses should not be deemed to be Show Hunters.
- A Show Hunter is described as handsome as opposed to beautiful, **HOWEVER**, if a Show Hunter happens to be “pretty” or “beautiful” in the head yet carries all the necessary requirements to be termed a Show Hunter, it is not to be penalised.

****If in doubt, always keep in mind the Show Hunter’s type and his suitability for the job which he is intended to carry out.****



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