

Australasian Gypsy Horse Society

Show Guide

Judging is not absolute.

It is exactly what it says it is:

A matter of Judgement.



SHOWING IN HAND - A Guide to Showing the Gypsy cob, Gypsy part bred and Drum horse.

In most show schedules and breed society rules you will meet the phrase "must be shown in natural state". This statement is not to be taken too literally; below is a picture of a Gypsy in its natural state. As you can see from the next picture, a certain degree of 'tidying up' is acceptable! ☺



This can vary from breed to breed but the overall impression that should be aimed for is natural, traditional and simple. Presenting yourself and your horse correctly in the show ring is important, overall presentation will be taken into account. Body clipping is not required for the Gypsy cob in its traditional appearance, however due to climate and or health issues it is acceptable in Australia and New Zealand and should not be penalised. If competitors choose to, both trimming and clipping should be done well ahead of time, to enable your horse to look as natural as possible on show day.

When showing in hand it is important to putting as much effort to make yourself look neat and tidy as is your horse. The judge will be well presented and you should be too, but be careful not to out dress the judge, the key is to remember that you are showing a horse, not yourself, therefore dress for the show ring and not a wedding. Riding attire is more than acceptable for in hand, especially if you have ridden classes on the day. All outfits should be well fitted, tidy and clean. Jeans, tracksuit pants, puffa vests and caps are not suitable.

Dress Standard Guidelines

Suitable for all show rings including The Royal show, there are 2 different types of dress standards listed below. It is a good guide to dress according to the type of class that you wish to show in (e.g., gypsy cob, part bred, drum, show hunter, pinto, heavy horse) But the decision is totally up to the individuals.

When you decide on the dress standard you must have the correct show halter that goes with that dress standard. Remember that your tack should reflect the manner in which the horse is being presented.

English Dress Standard: English bridle or leather show halter.

Riding helmet / hat
Riding jacket / vest/dress jacket
Long/short sleeved shirt / dress shirt
Tie/ stock/ scarf
Jodhpurs/ skirt/ dress pants
Riding boots / enclosed shoes
Gloves

Western Dress Standard: Western leather halter or bridle.

Western hat
Long sleeved western shirt
Bolo / bandanna
Boots
Moleskin or dress pants
Waistcoat / coat
Belt and buckle

Stallions should be shown in suitable headwear with a bit/or a bit and chain.

General show standards neither English nor western

Ladies:

- A good fitting pair of moleskins, slacks or a neat skirt (mini-skirts or long flowing skirts are not appropriate)
- A shirt and tie or a neat well fitted shirt and jacket.
- Leather runners or lace up shoes, ensure they have good grip to allow you to run

Gentlemen:

- A good fitting pair of moleskins or slacks.
- A shirt and tie or a neat well fitted shirt and jacket
- A well fitted suit is also acceptable.
- Leather runners and lace up shoes, ensure they have good grip to allow you to run

Optional

- Hats - remembering that a lot of our shows are held in summer, it can be very valuable for sun protection, it should not however be the centrepiece of your outfit i.e. Large decorative wedding style/racing carnival hats are not suitable. Your hat should sit tight on you head, allowing you to run without requiring you to hold it in place.
- Gloves
- Waistcoat

Hats and gloves are optional in all halter classes except in "Best presented".

Ringcraft

The object of the exercise is to show your horse in the best possible way so that the judge cannot fail to notice it. The most important thing you have to remember is that from the moment that you enter the ring and for every moment that you are in it you and your horse are on show. Anyone who has ever judged will tell you that there may only be one judge in the ring but there are at least ten more looking on. There may even be someone watching who will be judging your horse next time out.

Although the competition is judged according to the performance and impression of the horse on the day in the opinion of that particular judge, judges are only human and can be influenced by past impressions too. An efficient and well-turned-out exhibitor can contribute to this impression just as much as the look of the horse, so remember to dress neatly and correctly for the particular class you are entering.

The main system of showing in Australia, is based largely on the traditional British comparative method, where the competitors are judged in comparison with each other, the European system of showing, however is where the judges occupy different positions in the arena and the horse is sometimes lead around three sides of a triangle and marked by each judge, independently of the others, against an ideal standard, with the one gaining the highest marks 'winning'. The procedures in the ring are different for the two methods, but we will stick to the method most commonly used in Australia for this publication.

Gaits- Movement can vary but must always be clean, straight and true. Movement must be natural, not forced or artificial. The horse must travel straight, true and square with no winging, paddling, or crossing.

a. The walk should be relaxed, forward and balanced from the hindquarters. The walk should be a natural flat footed, four beat gait with the stride a reasonable length for the size of the horse.

b. The trot should be a strong, forward moving gait and should exhibit good impulsion and power from the hindquarters while being balanced with an even cadence in the stride. The trot should be a smooth, ground covering, two beat diagonal gait. The trot should also show suspension.

With all systems of judging the competition can be broken down into a number of distinct phases.

1. Before entering the ring

Your horse should be in the right frame of mind, having been quietly led around the marshalling area to settle, and looking as good as you can possibly manage. Before you enter the ring leave enough time for the last minute touch ups, wipe your horse over with a soft clean cloth, remove stray hairs and dust.

The ring steward will call the class, and it is now that presence is important, the well-known 'look at me' factor that everyone wants in a show horse. First impressions are very important and the minute you enter the ring the judge will be looking for the outstanding animals and getting a feel of the class generally with a view to choosing the first line up.

As you enter the ring make sure that your horse is leading well with the degree of activity that suits it best, that you are level with its shoulder and have a good contact with its head, that your lead rein is held securely and tidily with no trailing ends.

2. Entering the ring

In each class the judge or steward will instruct you on how each horse should be paraded. In nearly all in-hand classes the leader goes on the outside of the ring and the horses circuit the ring in a clockwise direction. Allow plenty of space between your horse and the horse in front so that you are not forced to check your horse behind a slow-moving horse and so that you don't get kicked. After about two circuits of the ring you should keep an eye on the ring steward next to the judge for further instructions.

Once the class is in progress some of the phases of the competition described below may be left out at the judge's discretion.

3. The trot

You may also be asked to trot on the circle. At this stage the judge will be looking at the action in profile, for such things as knee action and engagement of the hocks, but the judge may be able to see the straightness of the action depending on the angle of view. Ideally you should ensure that your horse is alert and active the second you start to walk forward, the horse should be rounded and hopefully showing a reasonable length of rein rather than being over bent. At the trot it is more important than at the walk to maintain the contact with the horse via the rein. A beautifully balanced horse can trot on a loose rein without any problem, providing it has good manners, but generally it is nice to have the horse going into its bridle and trotting with you. When you start to trot balance is everything, so you should still be level with the shoulder and able to run fast enough to keep pace with the horse, rather than hanging back and pulling the horse's head around you, which can make it look as if the horse is throwing the offside foreleg. All being well you should trot on fast enough to show off the extension of the trot without becoming unbalanced or breaking into a canter, continue around the ring so that the judge can have a good look, then return to the walk instructed.

4. The line up

Usually the judge will call in the best first but not always. You will be expected to line up, off the track, and to remain halted until it is your turn to show your horse to the judge. If there are a lot of competitors don't be lulled into a false sense of security and let your horse go to sleep with hind legs resting, even if you think the judge may not appear to be watching they actually might be. Teach your horse to stand properly as a habit and then allow it to relax briefly until it is its turn to exude presence. At the signal from the steward or judge walk your horse forward smartly.

5. Standing up for the judge

When called, you should walk forward away from the distraction of the other horses and halt in front of the judge. You will have a few seconds to stand your horse up so that the judge can look at the general conformation.

The English traditional method requires the horse to stand with all four legs visible at once when viewed from the side. Alternatively they can stand square with the weight distributed over all four feet. The feet should all be facing forwards. As the judge walks around to see the other side there is no need to rearrange the horse's legs.

Making the horse stand correctly is very much a matter of training and always insisting that it stands properly at home. This will develop the muscles and ligaments concerned and become more comfortable and easier to sustain. If the horse is used to having its stance adjusted one leg at a time by slight pressure on the shoulder (on the same side as the leg in question) pushing it backwards, standing it up correctly in the ring should not pose too many problems. It is better to nudge the horse backwards than to drag it forwards by the lead rein which can be misinterpreted as the signal to walk on. It also balances the horse better, bringing the hocks under the body rather than pulling the horse on to its fore, and so makes for a better outline. Once the legs are right the horse should be encouraged to reach forward slightly to show off the length of rein and then to prick its ears and look alert: the presence factor, again! The judge will then examine your horse. If the judge is looking from the front of the horse, take a step away from the horse and hold the lead at arm's length so the judge has a full view. If the judge is looking from the near or off side, place yourself at the horse's nose looking towards the horse, so you don't obscure the judge's view of the animal.

6. The individual show

When the judge has seen enough at the halt you will usually be asked to perform a triangle. Firstly you walk away in a straight line away from the Judge. (As you walk away the judge will be standing behind you to watch the hind legs for cow hocks and sideways movement in the hocks, as well as wide or close action.) You will then be asked to turn right and trot across the judge's vision and the stride should be lengthened somewhat in the straight line (In order for the judge to assess balance and proportion, top line, length of stride and engagement as well as lameness.) The trot should be maintained through the next corner, as you trot to and back past the judge and return to the line. The judge will be looking to see if the action is correct. When you turn and trot back he looks at the action in front for dishing. As you go past the judge can check the earlier impressions of knee action and hock engagement, and as you go away the judge will stand behind you and look at the hind leg action at the trot and if you trot on right round the corner he can see the action again in profile.

This is where the assessment of your horse's weaknesses and strengths really comes into its own because your horse has the judge's undivided attention. How you lead your horse is of paramount importance. Always remember to turn the horse away from you so that it remains balanced and cannot tread on you.

Bad behaviour can sometimes disguise action but if the judge is prevented from seeing your horse move you may well be asked to do it again, and subsequent failure will mean that you cannot be placed. The judge may request further demonstration from your horse such as backing them up or turning in a tight circle. If no further workout is requested, return to your place in the line and ensure your horse stand quietly and attentively. This will not only show off your horses temperament but will also be more helpful if the judge should look back to compare your horse with another.

7. The final walk round

If the judge has difficulty deciding or wants to check something, some of the competitors may be asked to walk round the judge in a smaller circle. As before you should give yourself enough space so that your horse is not impeded or distracted by the others. At this stage you should be watching the steward beside the judge like a hawk, particularly once you have seen them conferring.

8. Calling in and the final judging

When the steward calls you in, you should walk smartly to where you were previously lined up and halt. Keep an eye on the proceedings, if you are not called in first so that you line up on the correct side of the horse called in before you. Stand your horse up immediately and concentrate on the presence factor for all you are worth, while the judge walks down the line. Even if you are not the apparent winner you should not let up for a second because a pleasing aspect can sometimes result in a last minute change of place.

9. Presentation of ribbons

Whatever you're final placing, when you are handed your ribbon you should thank the judge politely and look reasonably pleased even if you are disappointed. Male competitors should remove their hats. You can now give your horse a pat.

It is common practice to leave the ring in the order in which the class was judged with the first place getter in the lead.

Winners of each class will usually compete in a champion class for the Best or Champion of the breed, which may be eligible for the Supreme Champion of the show.

Classes are generally judged under the following guidelines, however this is a guide only and it is up to the show committee and the judge's discretion.

Best Presented Classes

- 100% on presentation of both the horse and handler

Gender Classes

- 40% on conformation
- 40% on movement
- 20% on workout

Handler Classes

- 100% on the handler

As a general rule in hand classes are judged on overall quality which includes: - Balance and proportion, sound conformation, free forward movement, bone and substance, temperament and tractability. Emphasis is placed on type, conformation, movement, substance and suitability for breeding for the mares and stallions. For the gelding and derivative classes, emphasis is placed upon conformation, quality, movement and substance. Exhibits are judged in accordance with the Breed Standard.

Most important of all, enjoy yourself and have fun.