

Hunter Under Saddle

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Much like Western Pleasure, the Hunter Under Saddle is judged on the four following criteria:

1. Broke and Quiet
2. Soft and Smooth
3. Way of Going
4. Functionally Correct

Broke and Quiet – Broke and quiet horses are free from major and minor refusals, and give the appearance of being quiet and willing to the rider's cues and aids. Once it is determined the horse is broke and quiet, the horses are then evaluated on their quality of movement.

Soft and Smooth – Soft and smooth movers are Hunter Under Saddle horses that move in a cadenced manner and hit the ground light and soft on all four feet when traveling. Horses should move with a large amount of impulsion from behind and travel with long, bold strides.

Functionally Correct – Functionally correct horses are those that are correct when performing all three gaits. Horses that break gait and pick up wrong leads are not functionally correct, and should be judged accordingly.

Quality and Way of Going – Quality and way of going are important when evaluating the Hunter Under Saddle Horse. Hunters should show a great deal of quality and style and should fit the part of an English horse. This horse will have a big, long, bold stride wand, and when traveling (especially at the trot), should flatten out at the knee and cover a larger amount of ground. The canter will be longer-strided than the lope of the western horse; however, it should be noted that Hunter Under Saddle horses should still be broke and quiet and level over the top line when traveling at all three gaits.

Hunter Under Saddle horses should be **suitable to purpose**. Hunters should move with **long, low strides** reaching forward with ease and smoothness, be able to lengthen stride and cover ground with relaxed, free-flowing movement, while exhibiting correct gaits that are of the proper cadence. The quality of the movement and the consistency of the gaits is a major consideration. Horses should be obedient, have a bright expression with alert ears, and should respond willingly to the rider with light leg and hand contact. Horses should be responsive and smooth in transition. When asked to extend the trot or hand gallop, they should move out with the same flowing motion. The poll should be level with, or slightly above, the withers to allow proper impulsion behind. The head position should be slightly in front of, or on, the vertical. This class will be judged on performance, condition and conformation. Maximum credit shall be given to the flowing, balanced, willing horse.

Horses are shown under saddle, not to jump, and are shown at a walk, trot and canter both ways of the ring and should back easily and stand quietly. Horses are reversed to the inside,

away from the rail, and may be asked to change to canter from the flat-footed walk or trot at the judge's discretion.

FAULTS

Faults are to be scored according to severity such as:

- quick, short or vertical strides
- being on the wrong lead and/or wrong diagonal at the trot
- breaking gait
- excessive speed at any gait
- excessive slowness in any gait
- loss of forward momentum
- failure to take the appropriate gait when called for
- head carried too high
- head carried too low (such that poll is below the withers)
- over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
- excessive nosing out
- failure to maintain light contact with horse's mouth
- stumbling
- if a horse appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn or overly tired
- consistently showing too far off the rail

Faults that will be the cause for disqualification, except in novice amateur or novice youth that shall be faults, are scored according to severity:

- head carried too low (such that poll is below the withers consistently)
- over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical consistently

GAITS

Walk – The walk should be a forward-working walk, rhythmical and flat-footed; extremely slow or “jiggy” walks are to be penalized.

Trot – The trot should have long, low, ground-covering, cadenced and balanced strides. Smoothness is more essential than speed. Extreme speed is to be penalized, as well as excessive knee action.

Canter – The canter should be smooth, free-moving, relaxed and straight on both leads. The stride should be suitable to cover ground, following hounds. Over collected, four-beat canter is to be penalized. Excessive speed is also to be penalized. A horse that is over-canted (hip pointed too far to the inside of the arena) should also be penalized.

Hand Gallop – The hand gallop should be a definite lengthening of the stride, with a noticeable difference in speed. The horse should be under control at all times and be able to pull up, not a sliding stop, and stand quietly.

Hunter Under Saddle Terminology

GENERAL

Compliments

- Higher combination of...
- Greater combination of...

Faults

- Was the least broke, poorest mover in the class
- Failed to perform duties in a pleasurable manner
- Lacked consistency and efficiency
- Showed least ability

FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS

Compliments

- More suitable to purpose
- More closely resembled the characteristics of the ideal hunter-type horse, being...
- Better fulfilled requirements of the class
- Maintained gaits without anticipation of the rider's cues
- Travels straighter down the rail
- Efficiency in utilizing both leads
- Prompt, efficient lead changes
- More responsive to cues
- Traveled straighter down the rail at a more desirable speed
- Showed more flexion at the poll, looking straighter through the bridle while working off a looser rein
- Went on the longest rein with the lightest contact
- Looked straighter through the bridle
- Was more mindful of the bit and carried head more correctly (naturally)
- Head held more nearly perpendicular to the ground
- Had more contact with the bit
- More mindful of the bit and carried head more correctly
- Steadier head carriage and head set
- More responsive to bridle
- Nicer headset, traveling with more flexion to the poll
- Held head more naturally and showed more alertness and expression about the head
- More relaxed through the jaw, yet more attentive about the head and ears

- Held head closer to the vertical

Faults

- Was ridden on the tightest rein
- Lacked the desirable length of rein
- Required the most restraint from the rider
- Carried head too high
- Traveled with nose stuck out
- Heavy on the bit
- Was hard-mouthed, fighting the bit throughout class
- Behind the bit
- Was over-flexed and heavy on front end
- Above the hit and hollow down the back, lacking collection at the lope
- Is over-collected and behind the vertical
- Too high in the head carriage
- Did not back
- Was forced to back
- Was unwilling to back
- Hesitated and swished tail excessively when asked to back
- Raised head and mouthed at bit, lacking flexion and give to the bit when asked to back
- Backed crooked and unwillingly
- Has slow transitions
- Had rough transitions
- Was slow in the transitions of gaits, throwing the head and wringing the tail

ATTITUDE/ MANNERISMS

Compliments

- Bolder
- Honors the bit
- Worked more on the bit
- A willing worker
- More alert and attentive
- More willing and obedient
- Appears more pleasant
- Expressed a kinder, more agreeable attitude
- Showed more expression while working, showing more willingness and alertness out of the eyes
- Gives the appearance of enjoying the work
- Maintained poll above the withers
- More responsive and willing
- Calmer
- More alert
- Moved with less restraint

- Responsive and agreeable to aids
- Reined readily without hesitation
- More consistent
- More solid/seasoned/broke
- Most broke/consistent/relaxed horse
- More consistent and efficient throughout the performance
- Fresher
- Steadier, quieter
- More disciplined
- More attentive/expressive
- Responded with lighter, more subtle cues
- Softer in the mouth
- More responsive to pressure
- More pleasant attitude
- Showed less resistance and hesitation to the rider's aids and cues
- More steady, solid; consistent performer
- Most broke and honest performer in the class
- Showed to give a more pleasing ride
- Quieter, calmer and more consistent performer
- Less resistant to rider
- Less objectionable to rider or other horses in the class
- Quieter with ears/tail/mouth

Faults

- Was the least broke horse in the class
- Simply not broke
- Was a high-headed nervous horse
- Inconsistent throughout the class
- Required the most restraint from the rider
- Travels with excessive speed and must be controlled with undue restraint
- Needed excessive restraint
- Breaks gait
- Lacks consistency at the walk/trot/canter
- Missed leads
- Was an unwilling performer
- Anticipated rider's cues and aids
- Hard-mouthed, fought the bit
- Mouthed excessively at the bit
- Poorly mannered about the head

MOVEMENT

Compliments

- Light contact on the reins
- Freer

- More flat-footed
- More consistent
- Covered more ground
- Had a more definite two-beat trot
- Longer stride
- Freer moving
- More extended
- Lower frame
- Looser moving
- Flatter knees
- Less elevated/animated in the knees
- Showed a greater amount of collection
- More forward-looking
- More sweeping
- More cadenced
- Engaged hindquarters with greater drive and impulsion
- More supple at the trot, hitting the ground softer and smoother with all four feet
- Moved in a more collected way at a more ideal speed
- Was a lighter, softer-traveling horse
- Moved in a more rhythmic way of showing more brilliance and style
- More fluid
- More flowing
- More elegant mover
- More deliberate mover
- More purposeful stride
- More length and spring of stride
- Natural, free-moving
- Traveled with the feet lower/closer to the ground
- More athletic
- Straighter
- Reached further
- Exhibited less vertical action in the knees
- More powerfully driven from behind
- Moved out with a more pointed toe, thus having a longer stride
- Slipped across the ground, staying lower and leveler, showing greater reach of forearm at the walk, trot and canter
- Was a flatter-moving horse, that appeared to give a more comfortable ride by hitting the ground softer and lighter on all fours
- Backed more freely
- Backed more willingly (with less resistance to the rider)
- Backed quicker and easier
- Backed with less hesitation
- Backed with a greater amount of ease
- Backs easily without being forced

- More responsive when asked to back, responding by dropping off the bit, backing faster and straighter
- Backed with less mouthing at the bit
- Quicker to make transitions throughout the gaits
- Smoother transitions
- Smoother and quicker in transitions
- Accepted transitions with less resistance
- Smoother, faster, more prompt transitions
- Stopped squarely and easily
- Took leads without hesitation
- Showed more response to rider, picking up leads quickly and more correctly, going both ways in a quieter fashion
- Freer-moving in the shoulder, showing more extension of stride in all gaits
- Brisker-moving horse that maintained more extension of stride throughout class
- Showed more impulsion and drive off hocks
- Was a lighter, softer-traveling horse that showed more spring and animation of stride
- Longer, more ground-covering, purposeful stride
- Bolder-moving horse that showed more length of stride as well as impulsion and drive off hocks
- Brisker-moving horse that maintained more extension throughout duration of the class
- Lengthening equally from shoulder and stifle, achieving greater length with each stride
- Moved forward into the trot with more hindquarter impulsion, more willingly without hesitation
- More sweeping trot
- Showed more energy and purpose of stride
- Exhibited greater forward impulsion from the hindquarters while at the canter
- Engaged rear quarters with more drive

Example Reasons
Hunter Under Saddle

Sir/Ma'am, I placed this class of Hunters Under Saddle 4-2-3 and 1, finding 1 to be the most ill-mannered and lowest-quality mover, thereby being placed at the bottom of the class.

Upon consideration of my top pair of 4 over 2, 4 traveled in a longer and lower frame, being longer-strided with a flatter topline. Furthermore, 4 brought the hind legs further under the body to achieve greater drive while at the canter, and moved down the rail in a straighter line with more scope and attention to the rider.

However, I do grant that 2 was more consistent with a natural-appearing head carriage during the canter and backed faster than 4.

In my intermediate pair of 2 over 3, I recognized that 2 presented a higher degree of difficulty, being slower-legged at the trot with a flatter knee. In addition, 2 showed more free-sweeping

extension from the shoulder, thereby being longer-strided at the trot, and as well propelled the hocks with a higher degree of collection, covering more ground with a slower pace.

Now in the analysis of my bottom pair, I did place 3 over 1, realizing that 3 was more responsive to the rider's aids and cues, and was quieter with both the mouth and tail when asked to transit between gaits. As well, 3 was more consistent in speed at the canter, whereas 1 tended to charge the bit and run away from the rider's control.

Finally, it is 1 who I criticize and place at the bottom of the class today for being least suitable to purpose, being ill-mannered, requiring an excessively tight rein. One was simply the poorest performer in the class.

Therefore, the Hunters Under Saddle are placed 4-2-3-1.

Example Reasons **Hunter Under Saddle**

Sir/Ma'am, I placed this class of Hunters Under Saddle 4-1-2 and 3, finding 4 at the top of the class today for traveling in a longer, lower frame with a flatter knee.

In the initial pair, 4 projected a higher degree of style, moving down the rail with a more forward looking attitude, maintaining a longer frame. Furthermore, 4 trotted with a longer, sweeping extension from the shoulder, thus striding out further with a flatter knee, and also cantered with greater drive from the hind legs, achieving a higher degree of collection.

Placing 1 over 2 in my intermediate pair, I recognized that 1 floated more easily over the ground with less action from the knees and hocks while at the canter. In addition, 1 remained more vertical with the bridge of the nose traveling the second way of the arena, whereas 2 was over-flexed at the poll.

However, I do grant that 2 was longer-strided, covering more ground; nevertheless, it was the excessive knee animation that 2 exhibited which kept 2 in my bottom pair.

Though, I do recognize and appreciate 2's ability to stride out even longer at the trot, so I do thereby place 2 over 3 in my bottom pair. As well, 2 remained more consistent and steady traveling down the rail with less fixing from the rider, and also cantered with a more forward-reaching stride.

Finally, it is 3 who is criticized and placed at the bottom of the class for continuously pushing on the bridle down the rail, and 3 was comparatively the shortest-strided horse in the class.

Therefore the Hunters Under Saddle are placed 4-1-2 and 3.

Sources: Dr. David Denniston, Dr. Kris Wilson, and Dr. Jim Heird