

General Comments Ridden Purebred Classes

In the ridden purebred class, I set up the basic riding test not so much to judge it like a dressage test, but to assess the quality of the basic gaits of the horse under saddle. The gaits that were assessed were the walk, trot and canter as well as the extended walk, trot and canter. This gives me a good understanding of the innate, natural ability of your horse to be a good riding horse.

In addition to seeing your horses' ability under saddle, the rider's ability in the training and preparation of the horse is also important. A skilled rider and trainer will be able to enhance the natural gaits of the horse and show the horse off to its best ability. A less skilled rider might at times hinder the horse in its ability to move correctly. So ultimately, the ridden section is a combination of the horses abilities and the rider's abilities.

Judging the purebred section, also needs to include being aware of breed specific movements. As such, ideally I want to see very good impulsion coming from the hind quarters and a horse that shows me clearly that it is working "over the back" into the hands of the rider, with a good contact. The contact should not be forced, and should not be acting backwards. The latter is important, especially in our purebreds because they often tend to shorten their stride length, flatten a knee action that we would otherwise see them display in the paddock, and lastly, tense and fix through the back.

When you see the fixed back, you get a horse that is only using its legs in the movements but the back stays rigid.

Other important aspects of judging the ridden section are regularity in the different gaits and upward tendency. Especially in the canter, I am looking for a definite forward and upward "jumping" action and in all transitions (upward and downward) I need to see an upward tendency.

I would like to congratulate all competitors for their careful preparation and professional turnout of their horses. Most videos were well recorded and it was relatively easy to assess all movements. There were only a few exceptions where the camera person forgot to keep the horse in a good zoom or the odd occasion where an arena fence obstructed part of the horse. At times, the lighting was a little difficult with the horse moving in and out of shadowed areas or the light coming in toward the camera. But this was not unsurmountable.

Looking at all competitors of the ridden section, some of the above objectives were shown. Some were still lacking, in part due to the age of the horse, in part due to the level of training.

Generally, I did see a lack of impulsion from behind in many horses and at times some tense backs. Both of these issues were seen also in the difficulties that a few exhibits had with extending the gaits. So maybe that is something you can work on to improve in the future.

Finally, I think everyone did really well and put a lot of effort and passion into showing their horses.

As for the overall winner of the ridden section, this horse displayed all the above characteristics I have described. This horse showed great regularity of paces with good forward tendency, good knee lift and impulsion from behind. It had great balance in all gaits and used its haunches and back well during transitions. The contact was consistent and showed that the horse is working in self carriage with a very alert yet content attitude. The rider was sitting quietly and guided the horse to the best of their ability. It was a pleasure to see this kind of riding.

Congratulations to the winners and all competitors!
Sabina Holle