

# You Ready for Show Season? A Beginner's Pre-Season Checklist

by Barb Hento, USEF Judge

Getting ready for a successful show season involves more than training your horse and perfecting your skills. Success comes with pre-season planning and research into the opportunities available to the equine competitor. Following is a checklist to help you get started:

## ✓ Determine Desired Level of Competition

The first consideration is to determine the level you wish to enter and compete. The options begin with local fun shows and culminate at the national level with the focus on a specific breed or discipline. The best way to decide the level you want to enter is to attend various events and see where you fit in.

The local or 4-H shows are usually low key and provide a good starting place for those who are new to the show arena. The requirements are not as stringent and there's always someone willing to lend a hand and answer all those questions that a beginner is likely to have.

The next level would be shows that requires a membership application and offer year-end High Score Awards. At the beginning of the season, in addition to joining an organization, members sign-up for the classes they intent to ride in for points.

Continuing up the competition ladder, there are zone level shows usually involving a limited geographical area; state level shows; up to national level breed or discipline shows. As you progress up through the levels, the degree of professional help required

increases exponentially. The importance of having a trainer for the national level shows is paramount to guide the rider through each step and help insure that they properly prepared.

## ✓ Prepare Membership Application and File Registration

When you the level you are interested in entering, check out the membership requirements and fees you will be required to pay. Nothing is more discouraging than to compete all season only to discover that you forgot a key piece of paperwork.



Paperwork is easier to complete properly prior to the day of competition. That allows time to ask any questions you may have. Hint: Make a checklist of requirements so you don't forget something such as document or a required meeting.

## ✓ Gather the Necessary Clothing

Check out the clothes you already have for items that may be suitable for showing. If you are new to the game, talk to others that are involved to help you determine what you might need to purchase. If you are getting ready for a new season, see what you have outgrown or what needs to be replaced. Show outfits do not need to be expensive. While talking to a seasoned show rider recently, she confided that her favorite show shirt cost her forty-nine cents at Value Village. Don't be afraid to go to a thrift shop to find just the right piece. With a quick trip to the fabric shop to pick up some sequins, beads and braid plus a little imagination, a show outfit is born. The most important thing



is that the clothing fits well. Don't buy something with the idea that you can grow into it – it will not give you a crisp clean look. Color is important and should compliment both horse and rider. Avoid dark colors if riding in dark arenas. When in doubt, go conservative.

#### ✓ Check our Your Equipment

Your equipment does not have to be silver plated. The key consideration is that it is clean and fits horse and rider well. Loose or hanging straps create flopping distractions and give the impression that you have not prepared carefully.

#### ✓ Establish a Grooming Regimen

Grooming the horse needs to begin early. You can't make a mane lie flat, or achieve a well-shaped tail overnight. Good grooming should be a daily ritual that you enjoy with your horse year around. On light colored horses, stains are avoided only with constant work.

#### ✓ Assemble a Show Kit

During the pre-season assemble a show kit. This can simply be assembled in a plastic tote. It should include clean brushes used only at the shows, towels, baby wipes, spot remover for your clothes, bug repellent, baggies that zip lock (for that hoof black that wants to leak), extra hairnets, hair clips, safety pins, a marking pen and paper (in case you have to make a number), scissors, a mirror, an extra pair of reins and girth or cinch and boot polish.



#### ✓ Create a Show Notebook

A horse show notebook helps to keep you organized. This should include copies of your membership cards, your horse's registration papers (Avoid carrying the originals as they are easy to lose and hard to replace) and a lease agreement if your horse is leased. Make extra copies as some show secretaries will want to keep a copy. Remember to have a copy of your brand inspection and health papers if you are traveling out of your area. If you have signed up for High Score Awards it is helpful to keep copies of the sign-up sheet. Also copies of the classes you entered at each show. Don't forget to bring your notebook to the show. It may help you answer some of your own questions.

#### ✓ Relax and Have Fun

With a little bit of pre-season planning, show days become less stressful and more fun. Leave no detail to chance and your reward will be greater confidence. **NWHS**



#### About the Author:

**Barb Hento is a Licensed USEF (United States Equestrian Federation) judge, professional show manager & secretary. She has competed in Multi-Disciplines, Western, Hunter/Jumper, Saddle-Seat, Driving and has judged these events for a wide variety of national associations throughout the western states and Canada. Barb has accrued over 30 years experience as a teacher, trainer, showman, judge, stable owner and horse management with experience in stallion management, broodmare care and foaling. She has served as a Director for Washington State Horseman. She owns and operates B.B. Stables, Bellingham, WA, 360.398.2729, [www.bbstables.com](http://www.bbstables.com)**

## SHOW PREP VOCABULARY

**Discipline** – The style or type of riding: Hunter/Jumper, Western, Reining. A discipline is not breed restrictive

**Points** – High score awards are determined by the rider's place in the class and usually the number of horses shown in that class. Check the association rule book for specifics.

**Brand Inspection** – Completed by the State Agriculture Department to help prevent livestock theft. Horse cards feature a photo of the horse and describe the individual characteristics of each horse. They are kept in the State Office where they were filed. Brands are not necessary on your horse. A call to a local sale barn can put you in touch with an inspector.