

# How to Be a Good Host

*Your guide to organizing a USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competition*

By Krystina Firth

Perhaps your USDF group-member organization (GMO) or your dressage facility has organized and hosted a number of successful local unrecognized dressage competitions (“schooling shows”). Now your group is itching to offer the “real thing”: a United States Equestrian Federation-licensed/USDF-recognized dressage show.

## Read Up

USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competitions are dressage shows that are regulated by USEF dressage rules and USDF program guidelines, with scores counting toward USDF awards and championship programs.

In this country, dressage-competition rules and regulations are de-

veloped and overseen by the USEF. Approved competitions must adhere to all USEF rules and USDF policies. Therefore, the first step in the process of putting together a USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competition is to study the current USEF Rule Book (available online at usef.org), the USDF Competitions Handbook (online at usdf.org), and the book *Show Biz: A Complete Guide to Dressage Competition Management* (\$25; available from the USDF store). The USDF store also sells a competition-management flash drive, which contains all the USDF forms, documents, and information you need to hold your USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competition and which is equipped with an automatic update program to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information and forms.

Now let’s go through the competition-management countdown.

## One Year Before the Show

Start by **forming a show committee**. Depending on the size of the competition, you may wish to appoint the following personnel: manager, secretary, treasurer, awards person, grounds person, advertising/sponsorship representative, stabling manager, hospitality person, and scorers. The manager and secretary must be individual USEF senior active members, and the manager must also be a USDF participating or group member.

The next step is to **determine what competition dates are available in your area**. The USEF has rules limiting the number of dressage competitions within a certain mileage area on the same date; refer to the USEF Web site for existing license dates and locations. New competitions must request dates from USEF at least 60 days prior to the show date—the earlier, the better.

After you identify some available dates, make an appointment to **tour the prospective competition facility** (make sure it’s available on your dates). Inspect the suitability of the grounds, the footing in the competition and warm-up arenas, and the size and amenities of the stabling. If the grounds are deemed suitable, then draw up a written contract.

**Decide how long the show will be**. Many organizers now apply to host two back-to-back one-day shows on the same weekend (i.e., Show I on Saturday and Show II on Sunday).



PLACES, EVERYONE: Plenty of work goes into organizing a USEF/USDF dressage competition

You may know that there’s a bit more involved in putting on a “recognized show,” but you’re not exactly sure what, or what you’re getting into. In this article, I’ll give you an overview and a planning road map that you can use to help make sure that your show runs as smoothly and easily as possible.

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Registering the days as separate shows gives competitors the opportunity to earn more scores for championships and awards programs.

**Apply for a USEF license and USDF recognition via USEF.** Some shows also may wish to apply for local recognition, such as through a local USDF GMO. The GMO affiliation may draw additional entries, and the local club may also be able to help advertise the competition.

**Decide which classes to offer and then hire the judges.** Make sure the official(s) are eligible to judge the classes in question. Ask whether they are judging other competitions in your area. For the best pick of judges, secure their services two years in advance.

You'll also need to **hire a dressage technical delegate (TD).**

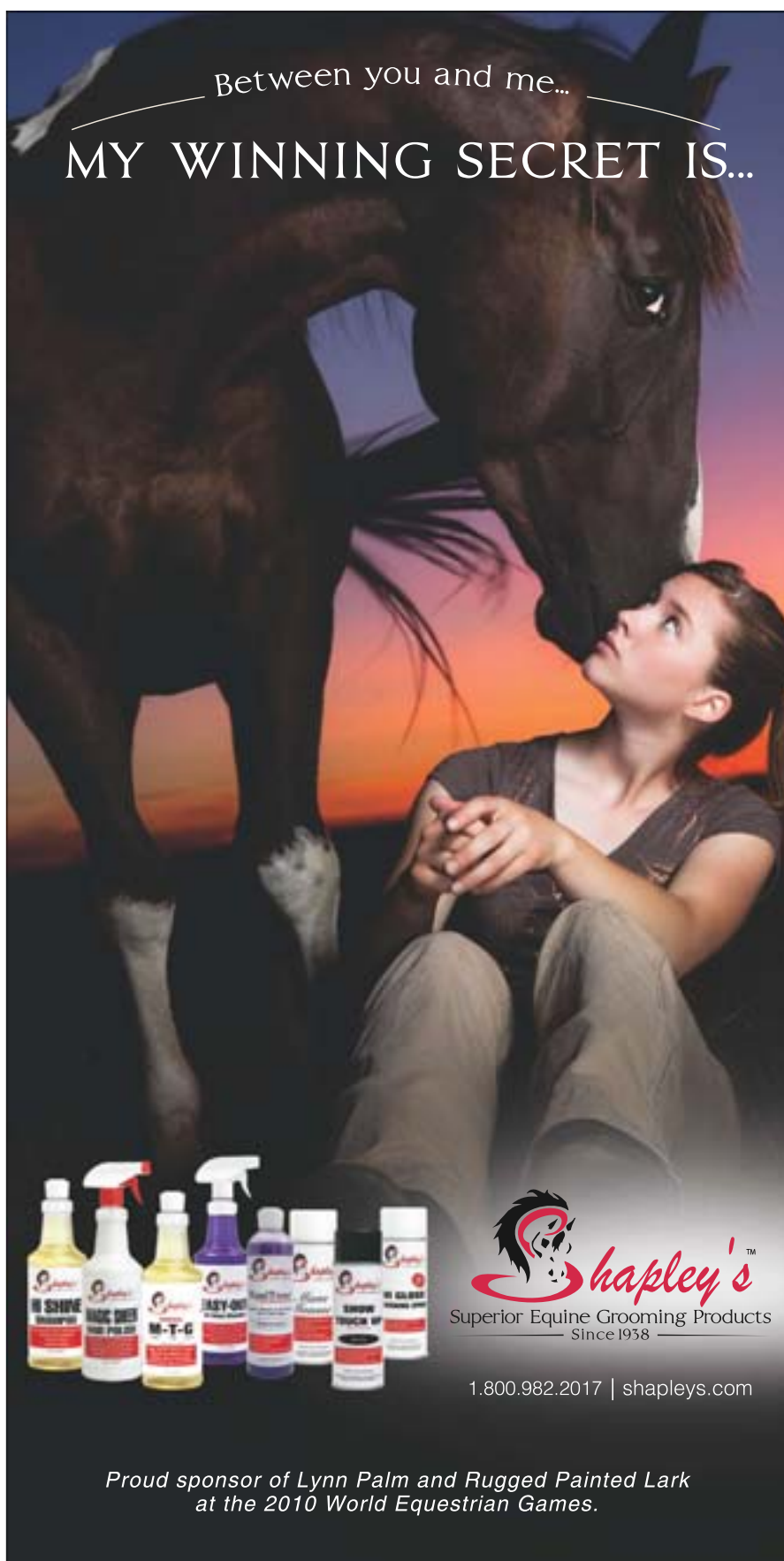
**Send all officials written contracts,** which must be signed and returned before their names may be published in show prize lists and elsewhere.

**Retain a veterinarian and a farrier.** Obtain signed letters of agreement and keep them on file in the horse-show office. Depending on the level of the competition, the veterinarian and the farrier may be permitted to be on call and not on the grounds (see the USEF Dressage Level Chart on the USEF Web site for show-level requirements).

**Retain emergency medical services** with agreed-on hours and duties.

**Hire an announcer, photographer, and/or a videographer.** This is also the time to order portable stalls, a public-address system, and portable toilets if necessary. Contact food-service operations and determine the hours of service and the menu. Check facility and county requirements regarding food-service regulations. Create sponsorship packets and begin to contact potential sponsors.

Consider purchasing a show-secretarial software program if you or your club do not already own one. Such programs can help you to schedule rides, to process entries, to create and print test labels, and to produce



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**toilets, judges' booths, stalls, feed, bedding, signage, the PA system, the arena, and the show office.** Compile a list of all the equipment that you will need, and decide what must be rented, borrowed, or purchased. Follow up with sponsors and begin to finalize agreements with advertisers.

## One to Four Months Before the Show

**Send the USEF and USDF offices a copy of the completed prize list and entry form at least 30 days prior to the competition.** Prize lists must also be sent to the judges and the TD. Most competitions today post prize lists online instead of mailing them.

**Secure all volunteers:** scribes, arena personnel, scorers, stable help, night watchmen, runners, ring set-up and tear-down crews, and others. Make a plan for volunteer hours and job assignments, and have a few "floaters" who can step in for no-shows.

**Arrange travel, local transportation, and lodging for officials.** Pur-

entry confirmations, among others. These programs save show secretaries huge amounts of time, and many also have entry-check systems that catch many common errors.

## Six Months Before the Show

**Prepare the show advertisements and prize list for publication.** The prize list is the first contact with prospective competitors and lists the classes, fees, judges, rules in force, stabling and lodging information, and all other specifics regarding the show. Make this important reference accurate, neat, well organized, and informa-

tive. Your TD, the USDF, and the USEF can be valuable resources for reviewing your prize list prior to publication.

Now is also the time to **order ribbons, trophies, badges, bridle numbers, and (if offered) prizes.** Your budget will determine the types of prizes your show can offer.

**Order other necessary forms** now as well: Membership forms, accident/injury-report forms, competition-evaluation forms, and others are available from USEF. USDF forms can be downloaded from the USDF Web site or purchased preloaded onto a competition-management flash drive.

Have the grounds manager **prepare the details for food service, portable**



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chase airline tickets if necessary, and notify the officials of their travel and lodging reservations. Note that, per USEF rules, judges and TDs may not be housed in private homes unless the judge or TD has agreed to the arrangement prior to the competition.

All USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competitions must carry insurance. **Certificates of liability insurance listing both USEF and USDF as additional insureds must be sent to both organizations' offices at least fourteen days before the show.**

**The competition secretary must acknowledge all entries received by the closing date** (e-mail is sufficient). The secretary checks each entry for completeness. If any required information is missing or if fees are due, the competitor must be contacted.

### One to Four Weeks Before the Show

**Schedule the ride times**, allowing for judges' breaks per USEF rules. Pay particular attention to the assignment

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of judges to Great American/USDF Regional Championships qualifying classes because competitors need two qualifying scores from two different competitions and two different judges.

**Notify competitors of their ride times** via postal mail, e-mail, or both; you may also post the schedule on a Web site. Send a copy of the schedule to all officials.

Compile all information for the show program and send it to the printer.

## One to Two Days Before the Show

**Post the time schedule in a conspicuous place** by noon the day before the competition begins. Also post the name and telephone number of the manager, the veterinarian, the safety officer, the closest equine surgical facility, the farrier, and the local fire and emergency departments. Post the facility's physical address and directions near the emergency phone.

After arena setup, the TD will most likely want to inspect the facility.

## Show Day

The USDF recommends that the **secretary and manager arrive 90 minutes before the first ride** to open the show office. The TD and emergency medical services must be present on the grounds before the competition can start.

Once the show is under way, **check all areas regularly**: judges, TD, announcer, runners, scores, hospital-ity, stabling, facility, and arenas.

## After the Show

Results, fees, and paperwork must be **sent to USEF and USDF within ten days** (there are some exceptions to this rule) or fines may be assessed. Both USDF and USEF request that results be e-mailed in the USEF universal template. Fees and paperwork may be sent via either e-mail or certified mail with delivery verification.

**Return any banners** to advertisers and to USDF. Keep all original entry

forms, a copy of the final results, and anything else connected to the competition for three years. All competitions are subject to USEF audit until that time; thereafter, show files can be destroyed.

## A Rewarding Experience

Organizing a USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competition can be a lot of work; but with advance planning and preparation and a supportive show

committee, the experience can be a rewarding and successful one. USDF Competition Management Committee members (names and contact information are on the USDF Web site) are available to answer your questions about hosting these competitions. As the committee's USDF staff liaison, I'm here to help as well. ▲

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