



# **PONY CLUB VICTORIA EXPECTED STANDARDS**

Including notes for judging and coaching dressage tests

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# GRADE 6 EXPECTATIONS

Judged on the rider's efforts and skills rather than the qualities of the horse.

What the rider can be expected to do at this level:

- Be in control of the pony's speed and direction of movement.
- Achieve the directives of the test.
- Be a safe, calm and happy combination.

## JUDGES NOTES

- Judge the rider's efforts rather than the quality of the pony.
- You are looking for a happy horse and rider combination.
- Does the rider try to keep the walk active?
- Does the rider manage to keep the trot at the same speed including corners?
- Does the rider reach the long side before starting on the diagonal line?
- Does the rider reach the long side before the corner at the end of a diagonal line?
- This level is for the beginner rider who is not yet able to canter in an arena.
- Make comments constructive and positive.

## COACHES NOTES & EXERCISES FOR RALLY DAYS

- Teach the movements and shapes correctly from the start.
- Look for 'error-free' learning. This is the base of the future.
- Teach riders to glance at the markers, rather than turning their head.

### Plan the entry at A

- Teach the rider to enter in the middle of the entry gap by preparing a straight line prior to entry.
- To stay straight on the centreline, teach riders to look beyond the judge's car.

### The turn at C

- Start the turn when pony's head is level with H and M.
- One stride on short side before starting corner.

### Riding Centre Line

- Group rides down centre line in single file.
- Without moving head, riders identify when they pass X and turn at G.
- Coach stands at C. First rider turns right, second rider left, etc.

### Turning at E and B

- Use 8 cones to identify when to start and finish turns at E and B.
- One cone on long side 6 metres each side of E and B and a pair of cones on EB line to mark end of turn and beginning of turn of EB line.
- Gradually remove cones.

### Riding diagonal lines

- Put a cone 2 metres inside the track at F, H, K and M when learning to ride diagonal lines.
- This ensures that the riders hit the long side before the corner.

### Teach riders how to salute

- Halt. Keep horses head straight throughout the halt.
- Reins and whip held in left hand.
- Drop right hand by hip.
- Nod head towards judge and smile 😊
- Take right rein back in right hand and move off.

# GRADE 5 EXPECTATIONS

Judged on the rider's efforts and skills rather than the qualities of the horse.

What the rider can be expected to do at this level:

- Keep the pony or horse going at the required pace and on the correct line.
- The pony or horse should stay on the arena tracks and show smooth corners.
- An incorrect trotting diagonal should not be penalised.
- An incorrect canter leading leg should not be penalised.
- A 'safe and happy' combination should be rewarded.

## JUDGES NOTES

- Judge the rider's efforts rather than the quality of the pony.
- You are looking for a happy horse and rider combination.
- Does the rider try to keep the walk and trot active?
- Incorrect trotting diagonals and canter leads are not to be penalised.
- This level is for the beginner rider who is able to canter in an arena.
- Smooth corners and accuracy of shapes are to be rewarded.
- At this level it is acceptable for the rider's rein contact to vary.
- The rider is to be rewarded for a halt that is still and straight.
- Make comments constructive and positive.

## COACHES NOTES AND EXERCISES FOR RALLY DAYS

- Teach the movements and shapes correctly from the start.
- Look for 'error-free' learning. This is the base of the future.

In addition to Grade 6 coach notes and exercises teach:

**The introduction of circles and half circles at E, B and C**

- Teaching circles requires the coach to understand tangent points.
- Placement of cones at tangent points assists riders to recognise and ride correct shapes. Gradually remove cones.
- Teach the rider when and where to look.

**The introduction of canter**

- Teaching riders to canter for a set number of strides or to a marker gives an end point and lessens the chance of the horse breaking.

**Priorities of the halt**

- It should be still and straight.
- Better to be progressive into halt than abrupt and unbalanced.



## GRADE 4 EXPECTATIONS

Judged on the rider's skills and efforts rather than the qualities of the horse.

Riders have either progressed beyond Grade 5 or are on inexperienced horses.

What the rider can be expected to do at this level:

- Ride the horse forward, at a consistent tempo.
- Rider has balance and can maintain a steady hand position.
- Transitions into and out of halt can be executed through walk.
- The free walk on a loose or long rein should show the rider allowing the horse to stretch its head and neck out and down. It should maintain a marching and relaxed stride.
- In corners and on circles, the rider should be asking the horse to look in the direction of movement.
- Trot work is executed in rising trot.
- When showing 'increase in trot' riders should be rewarded for showing a difference in energy and activity, even if horse does not lengthen its stride.
- Riders should be rewarded for preparation of transitions and accuracy.

## JUDGES NOTES

- Judge the rider's skills and efforts rather than the quality of the horse's paces.
- You are looking for a confident horse and rider combination.
- Reward paces that are active and consistent.
- Rider should change their trotting diagonals on changing rein.
- Incorrect canter transitions that are not corrected will be penalised.
- Smooth transitions, accuracy of shapes and corners are rewarded.
- At this level it is acceptable for the rider to maintain a steady contact most of the time.
- The rider is rewarded for a halt that is still and straight.
- Make comments constructive and positive.

## COACHES NOTES AND EXERCISES FOR RALLY DAYS

- Practice smoothness and accuracy of transitions.
- Practice turns onto and off centreline in trot.
- Teach each rider how to prepare for a smooth upward and downward transition - Identify a good or poor transition.

### Lengthening strides

- Make sure horse is straight on diagonal before lengthening.
- Make sure horse steadies in time for a correct corner.

### Teach riders how to recognise correct leading leg

- Teach correct canter aids.
- Be consistent with teaching canter aids.
- Appreciate that horses may have been trained to react to other aids. Be careful not to confuse horse or rider by trying to change their effective aids.
- As riders transition into canter rider needs to 'say' if they are right or wrong.
- In an open area, riders transition to canter in a straight line towards the coach and then turn left or right according to the leading leg.

## GRADE 3 EXPECTATIONS

Judged on the riders' ability to influence the horse's way of going.

What the rider can be expected to do at this level:

- Ride the horse forward, at the correct tempo and straight.
- Be rewarded for accuracy.
- Transitions into and out of halt can be executed with 2-3 steps of walk.
- Halt to remain immobile with horse's front feet level.
- Trot work is rising or sitting by rider's choice unless otherwise stated in test.
- Stretching trot.
  - Horse to stretch gradually forward and downward with an elastic and consistent contact with rider's hand.
  - The pace must maintain its rhythm and horse's hindlegs well engaged.
  - During the re-shortening of the frame, the horse should stay on the contact without resistance in its mouth or poll.
- Moderately lengthened strides.
  - The rider should show a clear transition into and out of the movement with some lengthening of stride.
  - The horse should be straight.
  - Some loss of balance should not be penalised.
- Medium walk.
  - A clear, regular, and unconstrained walk of moderate lengthening.
  - The rider maintains light contact with the horse's mouth by following the contact with their arms and hands moving forward and back in time with the horse's head and neck.

## JUDGES NOTES

- This is the first level in Pony Club using a 20m x 60m arena.
- At this level the judge should be rewarding a horse that is going in a correct manner, even if it does not have quality paces.
- The rider should show sufficient balance to be able to maintain a steady rein contact.
- Riding a horse forward into a steady contact, even if it does not maintain a 'round' outline continuously, will be rewarded.
- Pulling the horse into an outline and holding it on a tight contact will be penalised.
- Corners in walk and trot will be approximately a quarter of a 10-metre circle. In canter they will be approximately a quarter of a 12-metre circle.
- When cantering onto the diagonal, look for smoothness and balance rather than a tight corner.
- Halt preparation, accuracy, straightness and immobility are more important than a square halt.

## COACHES NOTES AND EXERCISES FOR RALLY DAYS

- Familiarise riders with the expanded territory in the 20m x 60m arena.
- RSVP markers and centre line markers introduced.

### Medium walk

- Teach medium walk and long rein walk transitions as a group on the track of arena
- Teach medium walk and long rein transitions one at a time on the diagonal.
- For smooth transitions, shorten the rein and the outline separately, only do one at a time (whichever comes first depends on the horse). When reins are shortened, keep the rein contact the same weight.

### Stretch in trot

- Riders' perceptions may vary about the “stretched” outline they are achieving. When teaching this ask individual riders to tell you when the outline has become correct.

#### **Moderate lengthening trot**

- This movement carries a double coefficient.
- The key is to maintain the rhythm and balance and create more energy without quickening the stride.
- Teach the riders to show a marked difference at the beginning and end of the movement, even if their pony club mount cannot lengthen.

#### **20m circles at X**

- When teaching circle points that cross the centre line, some riders visualize fractions while others prefer metres (distances), so teach both.
- Horse must be straight on the E-B line for one stride over X.
- Riders need to take the new outside rein before they arrive at X to have time to prepare for the new direction of the second circle.

#### **Serpentine 3 loops**

- Knowledge of the arena, its markers and distances are critical in making a well-shaped serpentine.
- The serpentine follows the outline made by the 3 x 20m circles from A, B/E and C of the 20m x 60m arena.
- As the horse crosses the centre line, it must face the long side for one stride.
- Riders who find mathematics challenging may be confronted by the geometry of riding shapes. Visual demonstration is essential to build their confidence.

#### **Sitting trot is optional at this level**

- Help riders develop their sitting trot so they can start using it in their tests before Grade 2.
- If a rider is being bounced too high and becomes left behind, slow it right down until the rider can follow the horse's movement without bouncing.

#### **Canter on diagonal line**

- Make sure riders end the corner on the long side and then turn onto diagonal

## GRADE 2 EXPECTATIONS

Judged on the rider's ability to influence the horse's way of going.

The quality of the horse's movement is taken into consideration.

A horse that is correct in its frame and way of going should not be penalised for lack of natural movement.

At this level the rider can be expected to:

- Ride the horse forward, straight and at the correct tempo into a steady rein contact
- Be rewarded for accuracy and quality of transitions
- Trot/halt/trot transitions are direct without walk steps.
- Square halts will be rewarded.
- Perform all trot work sitting or rising unless otherwise stated
- Be developing a steady seat, following the movement, at sitting trot and canter
- Have a balanced position to enable correct application of the aids
- Ride corners and turns showing correct flexion and bend
- Understand the difference between, and use of, flexion and bend.
- Perform leg yielding, keeping horse forward, straight and flexed away from the direction of movement.

## JUDGES NOTES

- Reward a rider whose horse is forward into the contact and not being held in an outline.
- At this level reward the correctness of the paces. Lack of regularity will be penalised. (e.g. a 4 beat canter)
- Expect a clear over-track in medium and free walk.
- Expect tracking-up in working trot.
- Expect some engagement of the inside hind leg in canter.
- At this level irregularities in the rhythm in walk and canter will be heavily penalised.
- Consistent overbending will be penalised in the movement and collected marks.

## JUDGES NOTES FOR HORSE TRIALS

- Riders may be graded according to their jumping abilities rather than their dressage level
- The HT dressage tests state a different purpose: to show developing balance, and to maintain a consistent contact with the bit.

## COACHES NOTES AND EXERCISES FOR RALLY DAYS

- Teach riders how to feel correct rhythm and tempo.
- Teach the difference between speed and tempo
- Teach group how to ride at a fast speed and then change it to the correct tempo for each horse. Riders to maintain the same tempo through the short sides, corners, and long sides.
- 15 metre canter circles from B, C and E, R and S

### Leg yielding

- When teaching, stand on the short side with horses coming towards you.
- If the rider keeps the horse's head facing the short side, it will not give too much bend in the neck.

### Lengthen stride in canter



- Practice clear transitions within the pace.
- Riders lose marks by not having a clear transition at the end of the movement.

#### **10m circles in trot**

- both halves of the circle should have the same number of strides.

#### **Simple change through trot**

- 3-5 steps counting with the front legs.
- Riders able to identify correct timing of canter aid as inside front leg is on the ground.

#### **Giving reins for 2-3 strides on circle in canter over centre line**

- The horse does not stretch his neck forward but does show he is in self carriage.
- Equal strides either side of centre line.
- Teach riders how far to put their hands towards the horse's ears rather than downwards towards the bit

#### **5m loop in canter**

- Make sure the loop is on one track and does not leg-yield back to the track.
- The horse comes on the diagonal and then turns onto the quarter line and then turns off it back onto the diagonal.

#### **Stretching trot on circle**

- Riders can work out how many strides it takes them to shorten the reins.
- Judges do not like horses coming behind the vertical.

#### **4 loop serpentines ridden from A to C or C to A**

Teach riders to understand that with 15m circles and 4 loop serpentines there will be a spare 5 metres

- Draw, or walk, a 15m circle at C.
- The 5-metre spare is split with 2.5 on each side.
- Draw a 15 m circle at E.
- The spare 5 metres is on the B side.
- Draw a 4-loop serpentine.
- Each loop is half a 15m circle.
- The spare 5 metres is as the horse crosses the centre line.
- The rider stays on the short side for 2.5 metres after C before starting the first loop and finishes the 4<sup>th</sup> loop on the short side, 2.5 metres before A.

## GRADE 1 EXPECTATIONS

The rider should have established a well-balanced and effective position. This enables the rider to develop collected and medium paces.

There should be a general impression of harmony and balance of horse and rider.

At this level the rider can be expected to:

- Have established a well-balanced and effective position.
- Show clear transitions between and within the paces.
- Ride an accurate test showing correct lateral work - shoulder-in, travers.
- Understand 'on the bit' and how to maintain an uphill outline.
- Execute turn on the haunches.
- Show the beginnings of collection coming from increased activity and impulsion.
- Show medium trot and canter coming from increased suspension.

## JUDGES NOTES

- At this level you may have a mixture of ponies and horses.
- Look for correct paces and way of going as the base on which to build.
- Faults in the qualities of the paces will be penalised.
- Consistent overbending should be penalised in the movement and in the collective marks.
- This is the first level of collection. Reward forward riding into an engaged shortened stride.
- This is the first level of medium trot and canter. Reward lengthened rather than hurried strides.

## JUDGES NOTES FOR HORSE TRIALS

- Riders may be graded according to their jumping abilities rather than their dressage level.
- The HT dressage tests state a different purpose: to show developing balance, and to maintain a consistent contact with the bit.

## ADVANCED EXPECTATIONS

Riders at this level are expected to demonstrate the use of an effective and balanced seat and have a steady rein contact. Application of the aids should be effective, subtle, and discreet. There should be harmony between the horse and rider. The quality of the paces should not be compromised by the movements required at this level.

### JUDGES NOTES

- Judges should be rewarding the regularity of the paces, the horse's outline, the transitions, and the correct execution of the lateral work and walk pirouettes.
- The horse should show engagement of the hindquarters and a lightness and 'uphill' outline.
- The judge should look for a correct base: rhythm, contact, impulsion, and straightness that leads to collection, cadence and lightness of the forehand.
- The bigger the movement the more potential there is for collection and extension. However, it is more difficult for a rider to keep a big moving horse balanced and steady in the outline.
- Transitions should be performed with fluency, accuracy and in balance.
- The horse's poll should remain the highest point in downward transitions, corners, and lateral work.
- A horse or pony that does not have 'flashy' movement, but is correct in other aspects, should not be overly penalised.
- Lateral work should show balance, engagement, and suspension.
- Corners in walk should be on a 6m diameter curve. In trot and canter they follow an 8m diameter curve.

### JUDGES NOTES FOR HORSE TRIALS

- Riders may be graded according to their jumping abilities rather than their dressage level.
- Will be judged on a horse being forward, relaxed and steady in its outline, rather than showing collection.

## Appendices

- FEI Dressage Rules Object and General Principles:  
[FEI\\_Dressage\\_Rules\\_2021\\_Clean\\_Version\\_0.pdf](#)