

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SHOW

THE BREED SHOW THE HANDLER AND HIS HELPER

PREVIOUS PREPARATION. WORKING ON THE LUNGE

THE AESTHETIC PREPARATION. MANES. TAILS. HAIRS THAT SHOULD AND HAIRS THAT SHOULD NEVER BE CUT AWAY

EQUIPMENTS AND COSTUMES

THE FINAL PRESENTATION. WALK AND TROT. THE FUNCTIONALITY TEST

INTRODUCTION:

HOW HORSES SHOULD BE PRESENTED IN THE P.R.E. SHOW TO BE ABLE TO SHOW OFF THEIR MOVEMENTS AND THEIR OUTLOOK AS SPLENDIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

Thanks to them, the breeders and owners of P.R.E.s have got the chance to show off their best horses and make them compete against each other. The duty of qualifying them corresponds to judges specialised in the P.R.E. breed.

However, before a breeder shows a horse, he must be aware of its morphology and how it moves, as this knowledge gives him the opportunity to influence so the horse appears as brilliant as possible, by applying different methods in the preparation. Thus, the owner must have a clear idea of how to proceed.

It is necessary to mention two fundamental things:

- · The preparation previous to the show - VERY PRECISE - that has to be done to the horse being shown, so its different regions can be shown off in a positive way.
- · The correct presentation of the horse, once in the show ring, so the different regions may be analysed.
- · As a commentary, I insist that the PREVIOUS PREPARATION is reasonably, the most important.

THE HANDLER: WHAT HE SHOULD BE LIKE AND WHAT HE SHOULD DO:

- He should be a skilful person, with a good knowledge of the morphology of the P.R.E , in general, and he should know specially well the horses he is going to present. He needs to have a clear idea of the defects and the virtues of the different parts of the morphology of the animal that is going to be exposed for examining.
- The handler needs to have sufficient time to observe and train the horse which the breeder is thinking of showing in the future, but also, he should be able to count on the help from one more person, who will stand at different distances to get different views and then will be able to assist and support him in the final coordination to make the horse stand in the best posture, to exalt its virtues and to conceal its defects. But, above all, the most important is that the handler is aware of the importance of this.

The handler should have confidence in himself, and therefore needs to have:

- · The due technical acknowledgment of the work he is doing, from the owner of the animal he is going to train or exhibit.
- Enough time at his disposal to train the horse.

- Sufficient equipment at his disposal, the necessary and adequate for the training.
- Rings or land of enough dimensions and adequate surface to carry out the training with the best guarantees.
- Rehearse the number of times he finds necessary to be absolutely sure of how to perform his duty.

When one is definite about competing with the maximum of guarantees against other horses from different studs, one has to fine tune and not neglect any small detail.

Another factor to take into account is the length of the lead rope the horse needs in the "in hand" classes, longer or shorter. But there cannot be given any rules about this, as some horses show better being looser with a long lead rope, and others feel more secure and go better balanced with the handler near to them.

One thing a handler never must do is to position himself behind the horses shoulders, as this placement can induce the horses to kick.

THE HANDLER'S HELPER:

If the show organization permits a second person to help the handler, the mission of the helper, among others, is to assist if there is any incident in the ring, for example if the horse gets scared, gets loose, or if it has problems following the handler during the rounds it has to do to be observed by the judges.

But always acting discreetly and reasonably, stimulating the animal if necessary, just enough for the horse to show off his movements in the ring to their maximum splendour.

One has to stress that if the handler gives too much impulsion to the horse, or if the horse is worried of his presence, these circumstances could have negative influences over the horse and its movements, showing irregularity in its gaits.

An experienced helper with a good mutual understanding with the handler, will complement the handler positively in his work, both when the horse is at standstill and when it is moving.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE SHOW:

To improve the horse's locomotion and so that it is executed at the handler's will.

WORKING ON THE LUNGE

Once the handler knows about the horse's strength, endurance, balance etc., it is necessary to schedule this work in the three gaits with continuous transitions, using the aid of the lunge line, the voice and the whip. This are the same aids we will use later in the "in hand" showing.

Developing this work coherently, we will achieve:

- Muscling the horse and making it loose fat, which will make it show off advantageously its different parts.
- Making it obedient and submissive so it can be shown in the best way and will do the walk and trot at the handler's request

Note, that the work on the lunge line, to have a positive influence on the horse's musculature, must be done in the three gaits, canter inclusive, because if it were not done this way, we would be doing an uneven work that could have a negative influence on the set out objective of improving the horse's muscular tone and locomotion.

The work on the lunge must never be exhausting for the horse, and even less if it is a young horse. As an orientation we can say that the training must stop before the horse is showing fatigue. It is also important that the work always should be soft and on a circle not smaller than 12 meters diameter, if there is space enough. If this is not the case, it is necessary to take precautions to work the more horse slowly and calmly.

Fifteen minutes of work is a reasonable amount of time for a young, untrained animal, while an older and more mature horse could have thirty minutes of this work.

We must insist in that the work on the lunge makes the horse disciplined and attentive, it gives agility in the practice of the transitions and influences favourably, as mentioned earlier, in the correct and homogenous development of its musculature, as the combination of walk, trot and canter, give a complete exercise of all the muscles used for the locomotion.

THE AESTHETIC PREPARATION OF HORSES THAT ARE BEING SHOWN IN BREED SHOWS

THE MANE

The correct preparation of the mane is probably the most complex of the aesthetic things of all the necessary to prepare a horse for a show. Factors like the quality and the quantity of the mane of each horse, as well as the conformation of the neck and the capacity and cleverness of the handler to choose the best option, determines the final result. A well trimmed mane can dissimulate a straight neck, a thick throat latch, a triangular neck, a too thick or too thin neck, a neck with a dip in front of the withers (see the educative section/morphology), etc.



Too long and irregular mane



Correctly trimmed mane

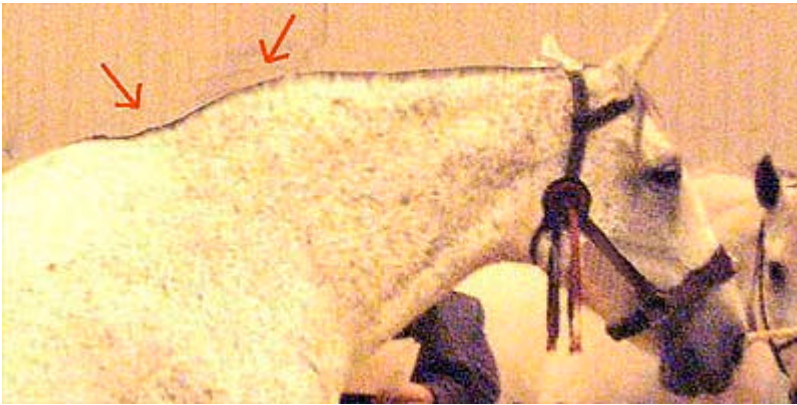
The colts until two years, and the mares who are going to shows, should always have the mane cut at a distance from the neck of 2-4 cm. depending on the particular characteristics of the horse's neck. As a general rule one can say that a very short mane makes the neck stand out, it makes it look thinner and longer. On the contrary, a longer mane hides the neck more, it makes it look shorter and thicker. So, if the neck is very wide, the mane should be shorter, making it look thinner, but not too short, as we could make the thickness of the neck stand out more, and also we would not be able to give it the necessary arch, which could make it look straight.

If, on the contrary, the neck is too long and fine, the mane will be left a little bit longer to make the neck look shorter and wider. It is all about making a balance between the proportions of the neck and the mane, so the result is getting a neck that looks arched and slender, dissimulating any defects it could possibly have.

A good neck with a badly trimmed mane may lose points, and on the contrary, a bad neck can get better points if a good job is done on the mane. It is not easy to do a well trimmed mane, it needs lots of practice and a good knowledge of the horse's neck.

There are breeders who roach the manes completely with scissors between forty or sixty days before the show. As the middle part of the mane grows out the quickest, as this is the most pronounced part of the neck, it is enough to trim the top line to give it the adequate shape, a couple of days before the show. The mane is thicker on the sides than in the middle, as the side hairs have grown less than the centre hairs. The less skill one has to do this work, the longer before the show one has to roach the mane, so if one makes a mistake, there is time to let it grow out. More and more breeders are now using mechanical clippers, as they are quicker, easier and give a good quality result.

The trimming of the mane should be done from the withers towards the forehead. The mane should be continued over the withers. If there is a depression in the first vertebrae, (dip in front of the withers), this region should be filled with a continuing mane, dissimulating the defect.



Trimming away too much shows off all irregularities of the top line of the neck



The thickness of the middle section is dissimulated, showing the dip in front of the withers



Both defects on the top line are dissimulated



A little bit longer mane gives more importance to a neck tending towards long.

If the neck is straight, the mane should have a slight arch, leaving it a bit longer in the middle section to hide the defect. As we are approaching the poll, the mane is cut shorter, but never completely, we always leave a little bit of hair.



A good job on a neck tending towards straight



Not a very delicate job on a good neck

There are breeders who like to leave the forelock on the mares, and others who show them with an uncovered forehead. Both options are valid, but to cut away the forelock, one has to be very sure if the quality of the profile will permit it; otherwise we are showing off a defect.



The forelock helps to hide a profile tending towards straight



No forelock shows off the profile

The main mistakes in preparing the mane are the following:

CAUSE	EFFECT
Not cutting the side hairs on the mane, only the top line	The mane looks like an upturned brush, giving the neck a coarse look.
Giving the mane too much arc	Puts in evidence the preparation of the mane to the judges, and the possible intention to hide a defect. Shortens the neck
The curve given to the mane is irregular	Gives a strange look to the neck, making it look unnatural
Cutting a bridle path	The neck looks shorter and thicker



Upturned brush shaped mane



Irregularly cutted mane



Too much arch on the mane and there is a bridle path



Mane too short

THE TAIL

All the yearlings, both male and female, should be shown with all the hair shaved off the tail.



Tail of a yearling colt



Tail of a two year old colt

On the two year old fillies, the tail should be shaved only 15 cm from the top and cut off 10 cm below the end of the root.



Tail of a two year old filly



Correct tail of an adult mare

The females from three years of age should be shown with the tails shaved only 25 cm from the top, the end is cut straight.

The males from two years old should show off tails, manes and forelocks in all its splendour, as the quality and abundance of hair is a hallmark of the P.R.E.



Tail of adult stallion

THE HAIRS THAT OUGHT TO BE CUT AWAY

It is not normal to see in the P.R.E , long hairs that affect the aesthetics and finesse that a horse of this breed should possess. Having said this, it is logical that they show in horses who are habitually grazing in cold climates. These undesirable hairs appear mainly in between the jaw bones, and on the feathers (when they have too much hair). When this is the case, it is advisable to cut them carefully, as they are clearly unsightly and also, it is not expressly prohibited to eliminate them in the show rules actually in use.



Hairs between the jaw bones



Too many feathers

It is advisable not to cut the feathers completely off, but to leave them about 3 cm from the start, for them to fulfil their mission so the horse's sweat or the water on it's body can drip off by these hairs to the ground. In this manner one can avoid that the liquid follows the trajectory of the back of the fetlock to the soft parts of the hoof, avoiding thrush and other problems.



Correct feathers

HAIRS THAT SHOULD NEVER BE CUT

The hairs that grow long, isolated and separated from each other on the end of the muzzle or near the lips, as thanks to them, and using them as antennas, the horse gets the precise touch and the orientation to get close to its food and things it wants to sniff at, as the situation and the implantation of its eyes does not permit it to see what is at the end of its muzzle. So the judges of a Breed show do not mind seeing these hairs on the muzzle



Hairs that should **not** be cut off

Also the ears are full of fine hairs that keeps liquids and dirt out of them. It would be a big mistake to deny this important hearing organ of such a convenient protection. One has to limit the cutting to the hairs that protrude outside the ears.

ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE COAT IN GENERAL OF THE HORSES THAT ARE SHOWN IN BREED SHOWS

The P.R.E. is a horse with fine skin and is so identified. It has, thus, short hair, shiny and smooth. When it is not like this, one has to think of something being wrong with the horse, or of an unbalanced feed.

In any case, it is necessary to have a veterinary look at the horse, to make a diagnosis and give the necessary remedies to regulate the situation.

On other occasions, the long hair is motivated by a too low temperature, as when it is lower than normal, the animal has to keep itself warm by its own means, therefore the hair grows.



Good quality of the coat



So, if we want to show the horse in the best conditions, which includes a good coat, we must stabilise the temperature of the stable, or give it a rug. Doing this we succeed in getting, no doubt, a better coat and, as a consequence, the horse is presented with more guarantees of success in the breed show.

ABOUT THE HOOFS

For the horse to move well, it needs an adequate, flat surface. If it has any problems in the hooves, it is impossible for it to move correctly, even if the arena is good. Therefore it is necessary to take well care of them, and see to that the farrier follows up this job carefully, so he can do the necessary corrections for the animal to be able to train comfortably and finally be shown confidently in the breed show.

Technically one can say, that badly conformed limbs have a negative influence on the ends of these, which are the hooves, but also, if the hooves are defective, irregular because of the uneven wear or they are simply badly cared for, it has a negative influence on the rest of the limb that they support. Therefore one has to insist on their proper care, regular cleaning and oiling and periodic surveillance.

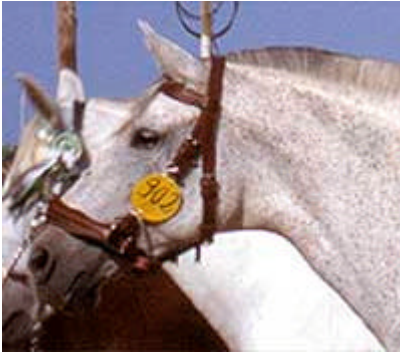
THE SHOWING EQUIPMENT FOR THE P.R.E. HORSE

As it is Pure Bred Spanish horses, the logical is to show them in the traditional Spanish way, which is, the male horses with the Spanish show halter, whose lead rope is attached in the ring on the front of the noseband or the "serreta". This latter should always be lined with leather to prevent hurting the horse.

The females should be shown in a mare halter, which has no "serreta" and the lead line is attached in a ring below the jaw.



Show halter for stallions



Show halter for mares

It is not usual to show a stallion in a mare halter or vice versa, although it is not prohibited in the rules, as neither is using other kinds of show halters as long as they fulfil the aesthetic requirements and are not inadequate or can hurt the horse.



Show halter used more and more, both for males and females

ABOUT THE HANDLER'S APPAREL

The Spanish way

The most classical and adequate costume is the Spanish, when the handler is dressed in this way, he also must ride in a Spanish saddle or a Spanish vaquera saddle, and the horse's bridle must be the classical Spanish or the vaquera, with the bit and the buckles in black. The rider may use two or four reins, if he uses two, the reins are attached to the rings at the end of the shanks of the bit; and if he uses four, two are attached to the rings on the noseband or at the ends of the mouth piece, while the other two are fixed to the rings at the end of the shanks.

The English way

This is used less in the in hand showing of the horses, but is used more to show the stallions ridden in the functionality test. The main reason for this, among others, may be the good results the P.R.E is showing in dressage, with a great international success.

The English costume consists of a white shirt and tie, white breeches, black riding jacket or tail coat, black boots, black helmet, bowler hat or top hat

The horse's equipment is an English saddle, bridle with a snaffle bit, or a double bridle with a bridoon and a curb bit.

THE FINAL PRESENTATION OF THE HORSE IN THE BREED SHOWS (OR IN THE PREVIOUS TRAINING)

AT THE WALK

The handler lets the horse walk comfortably, choosing the length of stride where it shows best its quality. He also seeks to keep the horse's head and neck low and stretched out, so the balance is good and the walk becomes ample and regular. The handler should keep in mind that in this gait (before the horse is standing still to be judged) the judge is already getting a first impression of the general conformation of the horse.

AT THE TROT

The handler should also be careful about the position of the head and neck in this gait, with the object of showing the quality of this gait, but should try and keep it regular, ample and with sufficient suspension and elevation.

These gaits, if the animal has been judiciously trained on the lunge, will be shown at their maximum level, in the limits, of course, of the possibilities of each individual.

SUGGESTIONS

Always look for correctness and brilliance, independently of the forwardness, which means, some horses show better quality in medium airs than in extended airs.

The impulsion should always be right, the necessary for showing a good air.

If the horse is lazy, he must be stimulated to get out of this, but only the necessary, the handler and his helper should be aware of the degree of impulsion each horse needs in each exercise.

THE HORSE AT THE STAND STILL, FOR THE JUDGES TO ANALYZE EACH PART OF ITS MORPHOLOGY

The handler must be very aware of the position of the head and neck of the horse, as this will influence how the different parts appear, as will be listed below:

The actual head and neck

The withers

The back and the loin

The croup

The general correctness of the limbs

The handler should himself take up a position where he at every moment can have a good view over the horse's position, and at the same time always be connected with his helper, who possibly have got another "field of vision" where he can take advantage to improve or straighten any negative posing.

Very few horses can hold its head very high naturally, without causing contrary effects on the related regions. If we force the horse to lift it too high, or we just take advantage of a momentary stillness or gaiety that makes it take this position, firstly the neck would be suffering, as it appears shorter when it is compressed, and at the same time it loses the arch on the top line and appears inverted, which is undesirable.



With the head held too high, the neck is inverted and the back sinks



With a lower position of the head the neck and the back improve significantly

Also the withers would be affected, as the neck will oppress it, making it flatter.

The back would also suffer, as it will be dipped to a certain degree, smaller or bigger, and the loin will lose its natural position.

The croup will also be dragged into these effects, as it might appear flatter than it is originally.

Finally, the limbs could lose their natural position as they are compromised for keeping up the centre of gravity.

So, we have to insist, with strength, on the previous preparation and in the training, that should be continuous before showing the horse at the event.

We also insist in, that the horse always should be trained on a flat and adequate surface, so when it can move well, it gets used to move comfortably and confidently, as well as it feels comfortable during the halt in front of the judges.

Finally, it is important for the handler to know well the defects of the horse to position it in a way that best hides them. In the following photos we can see the effects of the positioning of a filly which is "downhill" when she is stood with her hind legs further back.



Defect "downhill"



Position with hind legs further back.

THE FUNCTIONALITY TEST

When the judges have analysed the different morphological parts of the stallions, they are shown individually under saddle to be qualified.

The training of the stallion, even if elementary, should be sufficient enough for the rider to easily get him to execute the different basic movements that are asked for in the test.

The actual rules state that the judges judge the quality of the natural gaits of the horse, without having to look at the rider's position in the saddle.

THE WALK: It is asked for medium and extended. The horse should advance to the maximum without changing the rhythm of the steps. But, in the medium walk, he must advance less, although more than in the collected walk (which is not asked for in these tests). This gait should be regular and frank (one should be able to clearly hear four distinct hoof beats). The horse should always reach over the track of the front hoof with the back hoof, and with a bigger overtrack in the extension. The position of head and neck is low and stretched forwards, to facilitate the forward going.

THE TROT: It is asked for working and extended trot. In the extended, the horse must advance to the maximum, without changing the rhythm of the hoof beats. In the working trot, the horse advances less, although more than in the collected trot, and less than in the medium trot. The horse ought to show a good balance, and the strides should be even (one should hear every hoof beat), regular, frank and with suspension. In the extended trot, there must be a clear overtracking, and the head and the neck should be low and stretched to help the correct forwards movement.

Always, in this gait, the P.R.E. should show one of the principal traits that distinguishes it from other breeds, which is the elevation.

THE CANTER: It is asked for working and extended canter. The horse should go forwards, more in the extended than in the medium, but without changing the rhythm, the head and neck should be low and stretched. And in the working canter, the horse should advance less, less than in the medium, but more than in the collected (one should hear three clear hoof beats). In this gait, the stallion should show a good balance, the strides should be regular, frank and keeping a good suspension.

Defects in Movement;

DISHING

HURRIED STEPS

JOGGING

LACK OF ELEVATION

LACK OF EXTENSION OF THE STRIDE

MOVES BASE WIDE BEHIND

Characteristics of the P.R.E. Walk

It is a marching gait, symmetrical, with four beats, the footfalls coming in a regular beat one after the other and keeping the same rhythm. The horse starts the walk moving one of his hind feet, so then, if he starts with the left hind, this limb marks the first beat, followed by the left fore which marks the second beat, the right hind marks the third beat and the right fore finishes the stride marking the fourth beat.

In this gait the horse uses his neck which gives him the necessary balance, and its position, which influences his general conformation and conditions the going forward. Therefore, if the animal lifts and bends his neck, he moves his point of equilibrium back and reduces the going forward. On the contrary, if he lowers and stretches his neck, he moves his point of equilibrium forward and increases the going forward.