



**HORSE COUNCIL**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dressage Rules 2024  
Section 3

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DRESSAGE RULES

## Dressage : Section 3

### English Dressage

The object of Dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete through harmonious education. As a result, it makes the horse calm, supple, loose, and flexible, but also confident, attentive, and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the rider. These qualities are demonstrated by the freedom and regularity of the paces, the harmony, lightness, and ease of movements. The dressage horse should demonstrate the correct basic training principles, with lightness of the forehand and engagement of the hindquarters originating from a lively impulsion, while willingly accepting a light contact on the bit without tension or resistance. At all times the training should be following the training scale, the basis of which is three pure gaits.

### Western Dressage

Western Dressage integrates the historic principles of classic Dressage with the best of Western Working Horse tradition. The goal of Western Dressage is to develop a partnership between an equine athlete working in harmony with its rider. Western Dressage is a systematic and progressive system of training for the Western horse and rider, in the traditional stock tack with the purpose of enjoying a safe, pleasurable, versatile, and useful working horse. Western dressage tests provide the opportunity for horse and rider to demonstrate growth through a series of progressive elements by advancing from test to test and level to level as they develop in physical skill, mental maturity, and partnership.

The Western Dressage Horse should travel in a natural way demonstrating free flowing, comfortable strides. The gaits are free, regular in cadence and rhythm, consistent in speed and tempo. Lightness and harmony are the hallmarks of a Western Dressage horse with the horse willingly accepting light contact on the bit without tension or resistance to present a balanced harmonious appearance with the rider.

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## Levels of Dressage Tests for English and Western

**Note: For all HCBC Dressage Tests the rider has the option of rising or sitting the trot at ALL levels unless it calls for a collected trot. The collected trot must be ridden sitting.**

HCBC Dressage Tests for English and Western, including the Rising Stars Equitation Score Sheets are available for use at no cost, and can be found on the HCBC website under link: Competition Documents.

The tests offered through Horse Council BC are as follows:

- Introductory (walk, trot/jog & small introduction of the lope)
- Training
- First Level
- Second Level
- Third Level
- Fourth Level

## **Purpose of Dressage Levels – English and Western**

### **Introductory Level – Walk, Trot/Jog & small introduction of the Lope**

- The purpose of this level is to provide an opportunity for the horse and rider new to dressage to demonstrate elementary skills to encourage correct performance and prepare the horse for dressage tests which will include all three gaits. All trot work to be ridden in rising trot.

### **Training Level**

- The purpose of training level is to confirm that the horse's muscles are supple and loose and that it moves freely forward in a clear rhythm with a steady tempo, accepting contact with the bit. All trot work may be ridden sitting or rising, unless stated. Halts may be performed through the walk.

### **First Level**

- The purpose of First Level is to confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics. In addition to the requirements of Training Level, the horse has developed the thrust to achieve improved balance and thoroughness and maintain a more consistent contact with the bit. All trot work may be ridden sitting or rising, unless stated otherwise.

### **Second Level**

- The purpose of second level is to confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, having developed the thrust required in First Level, now accepts more weight on the hindquarters (collection) and can elevate the forehead sufficiently to execute balanced medium gaits and transitions while reliably on the bit.
- Self-carriage is required with lateral movements as an integral part of horse development within this level.

### **Third Level**

- The purpose of Third Level is to confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics and has developed an uphill balance with increased engagement especially in the medium and extended gaits. Transitions between collected, medium and extended gaits should be well defined and performed with engagement. A greater degree of straightness, bending, suppleness, balance, and self-carriage is required than at Second level. The horse must at all times be reliably on the bit.

### **Fourth Level**

- The purpose of Fourth Level is to confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, and has developed sufficient suppleness, impulsion, and thoroughness to perform the Fourth Level tests which have a medium degree of difficulty. As a result of improved engagement and collection, the horse remains reliably on the bit, showing a clear uphill balance and lightness of forehead. The movements are performed with greater straightness, energy, and cadence than at Third Level
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### 3.1 Dressage General Rules

1. Dressage is performed in an arena with a set of letters that designate where movements are to be executed.
2. The arena size may be 20m x 40m (Introductory/Training) or 20m X 60m for Training Level. These measurements are for the inside of the arena.
3. First Level through Fourth levels must be ridden in 20m x 60m arena.
4. It is recommended the competition arena should be separated from the public by a minimum distance of 10 meters up to 15 meters for outdoor rings and 5 meters for indoor rings.
5. If self-supporting letter markers are used, they should be placed outside the ring about 0.50 meters away from the fence and clearly marked.
6. During the competition the arena/ring fence may remain open at A. The letter A must be placed a minimum of 5 meters away from the arena. A distance of up to 15 meters is permitted. The entrance at A should be 1.5 to 2 meters wide.
7. Arena fence conditions must be the same for all competitors in a class.
8. The footing in the arena should be flat and level.
  
9. The Judge should be positioned 5m from 'C' and elevated for a good view of the whole ring. A booth, platform or truck should be used to give the judge a proper view of the arena. (Note: The Judge should not be on ground level sitting at a table).
10. Test Callers are permitted.

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### Errors/Penalties

An entry will receive penalty points on their test under the following circumstances:

- Failure to salute is an error of test and the competitor will incur a two-point penalty.
- An "Error of Course" made by a competitor will result in the Judge signaling the rider with their bell/whistle. The Judge will correct the rider by explaining the error and where the competitor is to resume their test.
- If the bell/whistle is not used to signal the competitor and the same error occurs against the same movement which is required to be repeated in the test, only one error is recorded.
- If a competitor performs a rising trot when a sitting trot is required or vice versa, the judge must signal the rider with their bell/whistle and warn the competitor that this is an error that accumulates if repeated, which could lead to elimination at the third occurrence.
- Not entering the arena within 45 seconds after the signal (bell/whistle) has been given, but within 90 seconds is a "Late Entry". This is considered an error. Two points will be deducted. This is not cumulative.
- A competitor who enters the arena before the starting signal is sounded may be directed by the Judge to exit the arena and commence the test again. The mark for the entrance will be given and crossed out with one line and then another mark applied to indicate the deduction of two points. The Judge should add the remark "Competitor entered before start signal". (Note: this is not considered an "Error of Course").
- The Judge may stop a test and/or allow a competitor to restart a test from the beginning or from any appropriate point in the test if the Judge feels in their opinion some unusual circumstance has occurred to interrupt a test.
- Use of voice in any way or the clucking of the tongue once or repeatedly is a significant

fault, which will receive a deduction of two marks from the movement in which it occurs. Each use of voice and/or tongue will incur a deduction of marks but does not result in elimination. (e.g., 7 becomes 5, with the comment: voice).

- “Error of Course, “When the bell/whistle has sounded or not must be penalized:
  - First Error = 2 points,
  - Second Error = 4 points,
  - Third Error = Elimination. At the discretion of the judge, the athlete may finish the test unless by doing so, it will interfere with the start of the next scheduled time.

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## **Eliminations**

An entry shall be eliminated under the following circumstances:

- Evidence of blood on the horse
- Not complying with the dress rules
- Use of illegal equipment
- Unauthorized assistance (such as: voice, signs, earphone, electronic communication devices)
- Continuous irregular pace or unevenness
- (Judge’s decision is final with no appeal)
- Dangerous/unruly behavior of horse
- Resistance by the horse of more than 20 seconds in a test or earlier if resistance creates a dangerous situation.
- All four feet of the horse leave the arena during test
- Fall of horse or rider during the test, may not remount to continue the test.
- Dismounting during a test
- Taking more than 90 seconds to enter the arena at A after the start signal.
- Three errors of course
- Taking more than 30 seconds to enter the arena after the start of the music in a freestyle test.

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### **3.1 a) Judge**

- Must check the arena being used for correct placement of the letters, etc.

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### **3.1 b) Scribes**

1. All test sheets must be completed in ink, pencil is not acceptable.
  2. The Scribe must check that the test sheets include the competitor’s entry number, competition name, date, and judge’s name.
  3. Any changes in the marks given by the judge must be initialed by the judge and be in ink.
  4. Before the test sheet is handed in for totaling, the scribe must give the test sheet to the judge to review to ensure all movements have been scored, comments filled in and signed by the judge.
  5. Scribes should familiarize themselves with the tests being judged.
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### **3.1 c) Test Callers**

1. Test callers are permitted. (Exception BC Summer Games test callers are not permitted)
  2. If a competitor requires a test caller, it is their responsibility to provide one.
  3. Calling the test is limited to reading the movement a maximum of twice without adding anything else which might assist the competitor. Elimination of the competitor may happen should there be failure to comply by the caller. The Judge must monitor this.
  4. Permitted dress for a Caller is considered “smart casual”, such as jeans, slacks, mid length shorts. Tank tops, flip flops, sandals, etc. are not allowed. Inappropriately dressed callers may not be allowed to call a test.
  5. Callers may not wear two-way personal electronic communication devices, e.g., Bluetooth, headphones, etc. while calling a test, they may however, read tests from any form of media device. (Exception: Callers for competitors with documented hearing impairment may use a two-way communication device provided documentation of their impairment has been submitted and the PRO (Provincial Rules Official) and the Judge have been advised.)
  6. Callers must position themselves so not to obstruct the judge’s view.
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### **3.1 d) Provincial Rules Official (PRO)**

1. Provincial Rules Officials provide help and guidance with HCBC rules at Provincially sanctioned competitions. A PRO is to assist show management with questions or concerns and encourage a safe and enjoyable competition experience.
  2. PRO should be dressed in “smart casual,” such as trousers/slacks, mid length shorts, etc.
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### **3.1 e) Para Dressage**

1. Intended for equestrian competitors with physical and/or visual impairments and to provide and develop competition opportunities for Para athletes.
  2. Para competitors must supply the show organizer with the correct documents regarding any permitted compensating aids according to his/her respective degrees of impairment.
  3. A copy of these documents must be attached to the test(s) for the judge’s information.
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### **3.1 f) Miscellaneous Tests**

#### **Prix Caprilli**

1. In the working gaits, a jumping horse is not expected to be as round on the bit as a competing dressage horse. The horse must softly accept the bit and may show more “roundness” in the parts of the tests separate from the jumps. Trot work to be done posting. Transitions into and out of the halt maybe through the walk. Test may be called. Refusals will be penalized as an error of course. Knockdowns will be penalized at the judge’s discretion. In the case of a knocked down rail being in the way, the judge will ring the bell for the rider to stop without penalty. After the jump is replaced, the bell will be rung again telling the rider to continue from where he stopped. In the event of TWO refusals at one of the jumps, the rider should go around the jump and continue with the test. This does not incur elimination.

2. Rising Stars Equitation Score Sheet (see Rising Stars section for more information)
3. RS-Adult Amateur Equitation Score Sheet (see RS Adult Amateur section for more information)
4. Tests of Choice
5. Eventing, Pony Club, English/Western Dressage, Freestyle, Para or other dressage tests may be offered at HCBC recognized competitions as Test of Choice but must be specified in the prize list.

### **3.1g) Horse Council BC Tests \*New tests for 2023\***

1. Available to everyone at no cost and may be found on the HCBC website [www.hcbc.ca](http://www.hcbc.ca) under Competition Documents.
2. Rising or sitting trot may be ridden without penalty when riding HCBC Dressage tests

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### **3.1 h) Dressage Attire English**

1. All dressage competitors regardless of age participating at any HCBC sanctioned Dressage competition must wear properly fitted approved BSI or ASTM ASTM, SEI, BSI/BS EN, EN, AS/NZS/ or CE VG1 01.040 2014-12 (provided they are BSI kitemarked) protective headgear with safety harness correctly secured at all times while mounted on the competition or event grounds.
2. Long hair should be neatly in a braid, bun or fully under the helmet, use of a hair net is recommended.
3. Riders must wear riding boots (plain with or without boot crowns, laced or with zippers) with heels (tall boots or jodhpur/paddock boots). Boots may be of a matching colour to the coat. Tasteful piping or crystal decoration is permitted.
4. Half chaps may be worn with paddock boots if they are well fitted and are of matching colour to the boots.
5. Long or short sleeved shirts with a collar may be light coloured, two complementary solid colours or pin-striped without bold pattern, with a stock tie, bow tie, rat catcher with choker of any colour or dress shirt with tie and may be long or short sleeved.
6. Stock ties are not required when riding without jackets.
7. White, light or dark solid-colored breeches (preferably white); are permitted. Contrasting piping is permitted.
8. Jackets or tailored dressage vests of any single colour. Subtle pin striping, checks, tweeds and modest piping are allowed. Contrasting colours collars with modest piping and or crystal decorations are allowed.
9. Safety jackets may be worn without penalty, provided they conform to the rules governing jacket colours.
10. In case of inclement weather riders may wear a suitable warm or waterproof jacket and protective hat cover. In extreme humidity or temperature, the judge may permit riders to ride without a jacket or vest. When permission is given, competitors must comply with all other dress requirements excepting shirt collars may be open.
11. Gloves should be worn. Black or brown gloves are recommended.

### **Not Permitted**

1. Sleeveless shirts or tank tops are not permitted when riding without jackets.

2. Multi-coloured/patterned gloves.
3. Bright coloured or patterned breeches.

### **3.1 i) Dressage Equipment English**

#### **Bits**

1. Bits must be smooth with a solid surface and no sharp edges on center links and must not put mechanical restraint on the horse's tongue or cause discomfort or pain to the horse.
2. Snaffles and curbs bits with smooth ridges are permitted.
3. Snaffle bits must be made of metal, durable plastic, synthetic material or flexible rubber.
4. Snaffle bits may be Loose Ring, D Ring, Eggbutt,, Full Cheek
5. Snaffle and bridoon rings: inside dimensions must be between 3.5cm and 10.16 cm
6. Minimum bit diameters where the bit connects to the cheek or ring:
  - Ponies: 10 mm for snaffles
  - Horses: 10 mm for snaffles and bridoons; 12 mm for curbs
8. Upper cheek pieces must not exceed 5 cm or be longer than the curb lever arms, measured below the mouthpiece which should not be more than 10 cm when the mouthpiece is in the uppermost position.

#### **Not Permitted**

1. Wire or hard twisted bits are not permitted.
2. Bit burrs
3. Bit guards
4. Tongue ties

### **3.1 i) Bridles**

1. English style correctly fitted bridles with reins, black or brown of any type (may have a subtle accent color on the bridle such as white padding, etc.)
2. Reins may be plain, rolled, braided and must be leather or rubber.
3. Browbands may be plain, contrasting padding, coloured. Tastefully decorated browbands are permitted as long as there is nothing dangling or hanging from the browband (exception: name tags)
4. Noseband, at all dressage levels a snaffle bit and bridle with one of the following nosebands are permitted; drop, regular cavesson, flash, figure 8 (also known as a crossed or Mexican noseband), comfort noseband (either with or without a flash for a snaffle, must be plain when used with a double bridle) or crescent cavesson (which may only be used with a snaffle bridle). Note: the noseband must not be tight.
5. A throatlatch strap is required except when a combined noseband or Micklem bridle is used.
6. Micklem bridles (bit clips are not permitted) may be used at any level where



snaffles are permitted.

7. At higher levels (Test of Choice, third, fourth) double bridles are optional.
8. Bitless bridles may be used at the discretion of Show Management, the Judge and or Provincial Rules Official.

### **3.1 k) Saddles**

1. Dressage saddle or English style saddle or side saddle, black or brown in color only (subtle piping is permitted on the saddle) with a girth, stirrups or safety stirrups (safety stirrups may be used and have the opening on the outside).
2. White, off-white, grey, black or conservative coloured saddle pads are recommended. Piping of a different colour is permitted. Striped or multi-coloured pads are not permitted.

### **3.1 l) Other Permitted Equipment**

1. Boots or bandages
2. Well fitted "Scoot Boots", hoof boots or glue on shoes are allowed, providing they do not protect the soft structures of the hoof, such as the heel bulbs and coronet bands.
3. Girth covers
4. Sternum relief girth or pads
5. Fore girths
6. Breastplates
7. Cruppers
8. Non-restrictive fly guards
9. Bucking straps
10. Fly bonnets (un-stuffed)
11. Net Relief or UV visor for Head shakers or light sensitivity if accompanied by a letter from the athlete and a veterinary certificate recommending its' use.
12. Headsets for athletes with documented hearing impairment. (Documentation from a doctor must be provided to show management. competition organizer must be able to appoint a supervisor to stand with the caller.)
13. Whips may be carried at all levels. Note: Total length of whip must not exceed 120cm for horses and 100cm for ponies.
14. Exception, whips may not be carried at BC Summer Games during competition.

#### **Spurs**

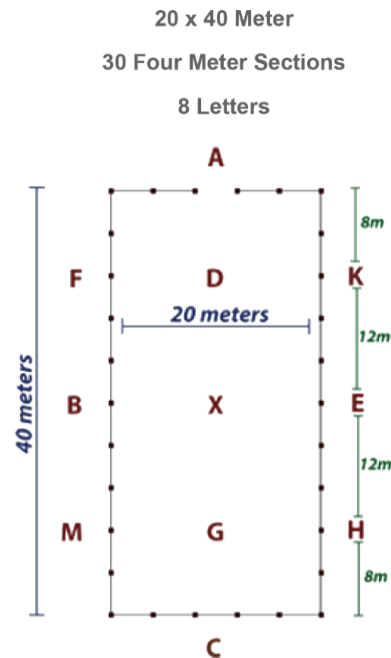
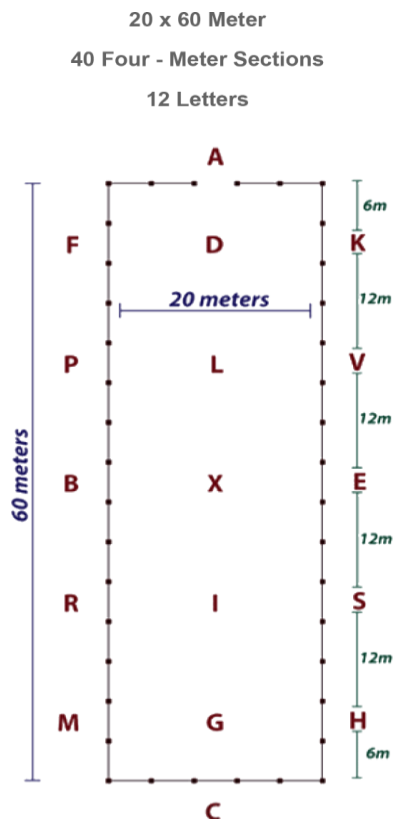
15. Spurs or 'dummy' spurs may be worn.
16. The arms of the spur must be smooth.
17. The shank the spur must point downward or straight pointing directly back from the center of the spur.
18. Rowel spurs must be mounted vertically, free to rotate, and not sharp and point directly back from the center of the spur.
19. Junior athletes mounted on ponies may not use spurs with rowels.

### 3.1 m) Other Prohibited Equipment

1. Martingales (*EXCEPTION: running martingales are only allowed in designated warm-up and/or schooling areas if a snaffle bridle is being used*)
2. Draw reins
3. Blinkers
4. Ear Plugs

### 3.1 n) Arena

1. Dressage is performed in an arena with a set of letters that designate where movements are to be executed.
2. The arena size may be 20m x 40m or 20m X 60m for Introductory and Training Levels
3. First Level through Fourth levels must be ridden in a 20m x 60m arena.
4. It is recommended the competition arena should be separated from the public by a minimum distance of 10 meters for outdoor rings and 5 meters for indoor rings.
5. If self-supporting letter markers are used, they should be placed outside the ring about 0.50 meters away from the fence and clearly marked.
6. The ring fence may remain open at "A" during competition.
7. The letter "A" must be placed at least 5 meters away from the arena and a distance of up to 15 meters is permitted.
8. Arena fence conditions must be the same for all competitors in a class.
9. Footing in all warmup and competition rings should be flat and level.
10. The Judge should be positioned 5m from 'C' and elevated for a good view of the whole ring. A booth, platform or truck should be used to give the judge a good view of the arena. (Note: The Judge should not be on ground level sitting at a table).





## **3.2 PROVINCIAL RISING STARS DRESSAGE EQUITATION PROGRAM PROGRAM**

The Rising Stars Equitation Program was developed and continues to be overseen by the Rising Stars Youth Dressage Committee established in 2004 in Chilliwack, B.C. In 2023, Horse Council BC meet with the Rising Stars Youth Dressage Committee for approval to offer this program through the HCBC Provincial Competition System.

### **Mission Statement:**

To provide Youth Dressage Riders, up to and including 25 years of age, the opportunity to participate in Rider Skill Development programs which foster competence and confidence to take part in Dressage competitions that provide a fair playing field environment for Youth Dressage Riders wherein each can compete with their peers at all levels of skill, from beginners to advanced.

### **Objectives:**

To assist in the development, improvement and continuing advancement of the equitation skills required by Dressage Riders, by providing an ongoing evaluation of their equitation skills during the performance of a technical dressage test.

The improvement of equitation skills is the best pathway forward to develop Dressage Riders toward higher levels.

### **Categories:**

Foundation Level: those competing at: Training, First and Second level.

Progressive Level: those competing at: Third and Fourth Level

**NOTE:** A competition may offer the Foundation Level only or they may offer both the Foundation and Progressive levels. The decision is at the discretion of the show organizers. Offering Introductory level is optional depending on entries. If it is offered, Introductory will have its own Champion/Reserve Champion (including the "Ride Off") and will not be combined with the Training, First and Second Level riders.

### **Ages and Levels**

**Youth:** up to and including 25 years.

**Adult:** 26 years and over

**Foundation Level:** those competing at Training; First and Second

**Progressive level:** those competing at: Third; Fourth.

1. Anyone judging Rising Stars classes must be a Certified Senior Dressage Judge
2. The Equitation Judge for both the judging of equitation during the technical test and for the “ride off” must be the same judge.
3. Rising Stars Equitation classes in each division will be designated in the competition prize list by the show organizers. (i.e., in Foundation Level Training, First and Second level and in Progressive Level; Third, Fourth.
4. The show organizer will decide if they will use the two (2) judge system for the equitation judging or the one (1) judge system.
  - Two (2) Judge system: The Judge at C will be judging the technical test. The second Judge, (the Equitation Judge) may sit at E, H, M, B or any marked letter. The Equitation Judge can be added to a scheduled technical class.
  - One (1) Judge system. A class designated as the RS Equitation Evaluation class. The Rider will ride their technical test at their level but will only be judged on their equitation. The Equitation Judge in this case, would sit at C.

### **Ride Off/ and Championships:**

1. The equitation score and technical score are not to be combined to determine equitation placings.
2. Based only on the equitation scores of the RSYD Riders, all riders achieving 60% or over, will be eligible to compete in one of two Equitation Championships
3. For eligible riders in: The Equitation Foundation Level Championship, the “Ride Off” will be based solely on equitation skills judged by the ‘Equitation Judge’.
4. The ‘Ride Off’ will be a group class including all riders who achieved 60% or over on their Equitation score sheet in Introductory, Training, First or Second level.
5. Individual patterns may be requested by the ‘Equitation judge’ to establish the Champion and Reserve.
6. \*\*If Introductory is offered, there is a separate Champion/Reserve Championship ride off. This is not to be combined with Training, First or Second level Championship Ride Off.
7. For eligible riders in: Equitation **Progressive** Level, the Champion and Reserve will be determined by the highest and second highest equitation scores achieved by those riders who achieved 60% or over on their Equitation score sheet at Third, Fourth or FEI level(s).  
There is no ride off for the Progressive level.

#### **NOTE:**

If for any reason, a show committee is not able to offer the “ride off” for the Champion and Reserve Equitation **Foundation** Level, then the Champion and Reserve will be determined by the overall highest and second highest score (from the Equitation score sheets).

**NOTE:** This program may be offered to Western Dressage Riders as well