

THE AMERICAN SHIRE HORSE ASSOCIATION



# Etiquette of Showing Shires

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



Approved by BOD 3/04, Updated 6/04

There are substantial variations in show standards across North America and between North America and other countries. It is important to comply with local standards. The following are general standards recommended by the American Shire Horse Association:

### **General Guidelines**

1. First and foremost, the horse must be clean and well groomed. Every horse must look its very best. The horse must be “fit,” neither too heavy nor too thin. Horses over three years of age can carry more weight than younger stock.
2. Using fine sawdust and/or sulfur to dry feathers after washing will enhance their appearance and presentation. It is suggested that legs (mid-cannon to pasterns) be “wrapped” prior to halter class and wraps removed before class to allow “spats” to lay down and emphasize the bone and angles of the lower legs.
3. Ears and chin should be neatly trimmed. Minimally on ears, any hair that sticks out when you fold the ear lengthwise in half is trimmed. A bridle path is trimmed. Further trimming to enhance appearance may be done. Pulling of the mane to approximately one third the width of the neck is also standard practice.
4. Tails should be braided or put up in some manner so there is no untied hair, giving the judge an unobstructed view of the hind legs of the horse. Scotch knots are traditional for docked tails, and french braids and/or scotch knots for long tails. Manes should be rolled or plaited on stallions and geldings over one year of age for halter classes. Braiding manes on mares or foals is optional – it is done in Canada and England. This varies regionally, so check with local showmen before you roll. All horses’ manes are rolled for hitch classes. Braiding of forelocks is optional, but they are not shaved for the show ring.
5. Shires are traditionally shown in russet or black show bridles, but white or other colors may be used if preferred. At county fairs a clean halter and matching lead line is usually adequate.
6. Stallion girths (rollers) are encouraged on stallions over two years of age as they make stallions easier to manage and enhance their appearance.
7. Use of show sticks or crops is a matter of regional or personal preference.
8. Over- shoeing is discouraged. Shoeing horses less than two years of age is optional, but older horses should be shod. Clear hoof dressing may be used, but hooves should not be blackened or whitened.
9. Dye or other substances should not be used to alter the coat color or markings of horses entered in registered halter classes.
10. Like the horses, the handlers must be clean and well groomed. At the national or regional shows, slacks, sport shirt, boots or shoes should be worn. Dress shirt and tie, as well as jacket or vest, may be considered. Coordination of the attire of the horse and show person is desirable. Having handlers from a farm or ranch dressed alike also enhances overall presentation.
11. Where mares and foals can be in the show ring together, foals must be on a lead with a separate handler.
12. Handlers must be able to make the horse behave. Training should be done at home, not in the show ring. Stallions two and over should be shown by competent handlers 18 years of age or older. (In some states this is required by law)
13. Stall and barn areas should be kept clean and tidy at all times. Manure and soiled bedding should be removed promptly.

## **Ring Procedures**

Safety is the most important aspect of showing at halter! Always watch the judge, your own horse and other horses near you.

### **Halter**

1. Be ready to go into the ring with your number displayed when your class is called. Never make the class wait for you!
2. Trot smartly into the ring, line up at the ring steward's direction, and set your horse up. Always watch to make sure the horse stays "set up" and always keep the horse's head up and alert. Keep eye contact with the judge as much as possible while also watching your horse, and try to keep a horse's length or width between your animal and other animals in the class. Never let your horse turn in line. Your "trailer" might help by standing on the horse's other side and not permitting it to turn.
3. You should stay on the horse's left side and should always watch the judge.
4. When the judge or ring steward nods to you, walk toward the judge. The judge will tell you what he wants you to do. If you don't understand, ask.
5. When showing a horse on the move, the lead line should be in your right hand and slightly slack. If carrying a show stick it should be in the hand opposite the lead line.
6. Use the show stick to guide (back or side-to-side) the horse and assist setting up in proper show stance and the lead to control the horse (go or whoa). When you are walking or running you may also bring the show stick up in front of you to guide through turns or keep the horse off of you.
7. Always move your horse in a straight line away from and back to the judge. If your horse moves too far out of that line or breaks gait, go back and walk or trot in a straight line again.
8. When you are moving away from the judge, look back and make sure you are still in a straight line (keep eye contact). Use a "key-hole" pattern to turn at a walk. The horse should not pivot on its rear end.
9. A "trailer" (or whip person) may be present and instructed when and if you need help. In junior showmanship classes one trailer may be designated for all participants, and will ask each youth if they would like help. In Canada trailers are not used. Your trailer should follow about 10 feet behind your horse on the same side of the horse as you are. They usually quickly change sides as you reverse so as not to block the judge's view of the horse.
10. Slow down before you reach the judge and stop about eight to ten feet in front of the judge. After you stop you have about a minute to turn toward your horse (toes point to horse's feet), switch the lead line to your left hand, and "set up" your horse. Try to place horse's front feet on higher ground than the back feet (your horse looks better "uphill"). Horses should be trained at home to do this promptly. When standing facing the horse, you may also stand with one of your feet slightly ahead of the other to allow you to pivot more easily. Once your horse is set, stand back so the judge can view your animal. Your

trailer may now be about 10 feet in front of your horse helping to keep your horse's ears up by raising and "jiggling" the whip.

11. Once the judge has inspected your horse, turn your animal (ALWAYS away from you, never onto you) and trot to the far end of the line-up. Remember, you are **always** being judged. Once in line again, set your horse up and keep the animal alert.
12. After the horse being presented has gone up to the judge (Step #4), the remaining horses must "move up" in line. Starting with the next to show, each horse is moved back 2-3 steps, turned, and moved in to the adjacent (vacated) space. Backing first prevents your horse from swinging into his neighbor as he is moved sideways.
13. After all horses have moved, the judge will walk down the line and reexamine each horse. Watch the judge. He or she will then call the horses out into a head to tail line up in initial order of placing to compare them. Follow the steward or judge's direction. You are still being judged, and your position may be changed while in this line up.
14. The ribbons will now be handed out, but wait until the placings are announced to trot your horse out of the ring.

In some cases, the instructions given may vary from this format; follow the instructions of the ring steward or judge. Always maintain a safe and courteous distance from other horses.

### **Important Highlights to Remember**

- Eye contact with the judge.
- Lead in right hand when moving.
- Lead in left hand and facing horse when stopped.
- Learn to use a show stick or crop to enhance your showing.
- Use keyhole turns.
- Train your horse at home and your show experience will be a great one!
- Smile!

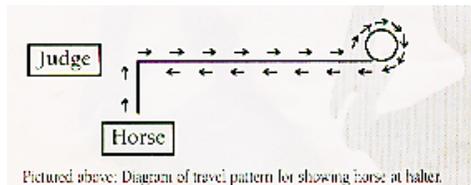
### **Definitions**

"Set Up": Hind Legs – should be close together and an imaginary vertical line could be made from the rump to the hock to the pastern. One hind leg may be slightly in front of the other.

Front Legs – should be set up even and "square" to the shoulder.

"Trailer": designated person to carry a whip.

"Key-hole turn":



"Show stick": a short (1 ½ foot) stick. A broom handle with rounded ends or golf club cut to desired length works well. A short whip, such as a dressage whip, also works.

## **Hitch**

Be at ringside on time with your number attached to the back of the vehicle. At some shows there is a time limit and if you are late you cannot show and forfeit your entry fee.

You should enter the ring at a trot and turn to the right (unless directed differently by the ring steward), being careful not to run into anyone already in the ring. Once in the ring, make your turn short at the gate to allow others to enter. The steward may request those in the ring to walk or halt to allow others to enter. You will normally be asked to walk and trot in both directions. The reverse is usually done diagonally across the ring at the steward's direction. It is good to know in advance if passing is allowed (at most shows this is frowned upon). If you do pass, do not cut in or in any way interfere with someone else's driving.

After the judge has seen the horses move both directions, you will be instructed to line up in the middle of the ring side-by-side. Horses are expected to stand quietly. Most shows permit a "header," but the horses should not be touched unless necessary. The judge will move down the line, inspecting each hitch and then requesting a back. This should be done straight and quietly. After backing a few steps, the horses move forward to the original position according to the judge's hand signaled guidance. In some cases the driver is asked to "fan" – a move of swinging the team from side to side and then back into place while the vehicle stays stationary.

The winners are then called out to receive their ribbons. The first place entry generally remains in the ring after receiving their ribbon to make a "victory pass." All others leave immediately at a trot upon receiving ribbons. Always follow the announcer's instructions.

## **Attire for Hitch**

Men: At large shows a suit, sport coat, or vest worn with a tie is always acceptable. Hats are recommended. At smaller shows, attire may be less formal but the driver and rider should always be tidy. A whip should be carried for single and team classes. Gloves are optional but recommended.

Women: A pantsuit or blazer and slacks are fine for all but Ladies' Cart classes. In this class, dressier clothes are generally worn. Hats are sometimes required and always look good. Gloves are optional but recommended and a whip is carried in single or team classes. Shoes or boots that complement the outfit finish off the attire.

Juniors: Clothing should be similar to that worn by adults. It is important for clothing to fit properly, not loose and bulky which could become tangled, or too tight which restricts movement. Safety should always be considered. Most shows require that adults accompany all junior drivers. Even with an adult on the seat, young people who cannot clearly handle a horse or horses should not be encouraged to enter a class.

Headers and Assistants: Must also be appropriately dressed.

All drivers, regardless of age, should always consider safety first. Safety helmets (such as English riding helmets) are encouraged for junior showmanship, hitch, and riding classes, and at some shows are required for exhibitors under 18 years of age.

*Also refer to the Youth Guidelines for Showing Shires for more detailed discussion.*