

IN-HAND CLASSES

by Karen Chorney

Turnout

Turnout will vary depending on which classes/division(s) you are showing in. While braiding is not mandatory for any division, it is common in several – more on that later.

Your pony should be in good condition, bathed and well-groomed prior to the show. Your pony may like to roll in the stall, picking up stains in the process. Lycra blankets and hoods can help prevent this and it never hurts to have a bottle of no-rinse shampoo on hand for last minute touch-ups if needed. Manes and tails should be neat and tidy. Be aware of whether or not braiding is acceptable for the division you're competing in. You may also use hoof oil on hooves, but it is not recommended to use hoof black, especially on light coloured hooves.

Tack

Generally, Welsh classes call for a white web or nylon halter to be used if you are showing a Section A, C or D. However, it is perfectly acceptable to show your Welsh in a nice leather halter or bridle. Make sure it fits well, is clean and looks tidy. All other ponies generally show in a well-fitted leather halter or bridle.

Attire

Attire varies based on the division and region you are showing in. Generally, in Alberta, this is the variety of attire you will see in an in-hand class:

- Nice button-down shirt, comfortable pants and footwear, such as running shoes
- Neutral polo shirt, light colored khakis and dark running shoes
- English riding attire, with running shoes or paddock boots instead of tall boots

It's best to wear colours that contrast with your pony's colour, especially the pants. For example, if you have a light grey pony and wear black pants, when you run your pony out, it is much easier for the judge to see the movement of your pony's front legs. If you wore a very light color, your legs and your pony's legs may blend together, making movement more difficult to see. If you are showing more than one pony and one is light and one is dark, choose a neutral pair of pants that will work well with both.

Gloves and a short crop are optional. Be sure you know the rules about which length of crop is acceptable in the division you are showing in.

In other areas of North America, you may see several other types of attire in the ring including fancy ladies' hats, ball caps with sport jackets, flat caps, Panama hats, vests, and even dresses. All are acceptable.



These two photos illustrate some of the acceptable tack and attire seen in most in-hand classes. On the left is a Section A Welsh pony in a white nylon show halter. On the right is a Half-Welsh pony in a leather bridle. Notice that both handlers are wearing clothing that allows the pony's movement to stand out and be more easily seen by the judge.

PC: M. Tanney

Showing

When you compete in an in-hand division, the ring steward will let you know what the judge wants to see. They will want you to walk in some areas, trot in others and stand your pony up so conformation can be judged. Be sure you practice at home so that your pony will walk and trot on cue and stand up well for the judge. You should also practice standing your pony up in the open stance (not square). Welsh are not required to stretch. When your pony is stood up and the judge is on one side, you should make sure that you are on the other, so as not to impede their view. When you are in a double-judged class and the judges are on either side – do the best you can!



This is a Section B Welsh stallion being stood up in the open stance in order for the judge to assess his conformation. Notice how both legs on this side are slightly closer together than his legs on the other side – this is the open stance. PC: M.Tanney

Some in-hand classes are held on the triangle, in which case one will be set up in the ring. Often cones or flower pots may be used on the points of the triangle. There are generally two ways a triangle may be set up:

- One large triangle
- A large triangle, with a smaller triangle inside of it.

When the smaller triangle is used, generally you will navigate it at a walk first, then continue on to the bigger triangle where there is enough room to trot. Again, the ring steward will tell you how to navigate the triangle.



Connemara showing on the triangle in the NDPC Dressage Breeding classes. PC: M.Tanney

Championships

There is no fee to enter Championship classes. The only way to participate in an in-hand Championship is to earn your way in by placing 1st or 2nd in your in-hand class. *Performance Championships are based on points earned in the division.*

Here is how the progression from class to Championship, Grand Championship and for Welsh, Supreme Championship works:

- **Step 1: Class Placings to Championship**

If your pony places 1st or 2nd in its in-hand class, it qualifies for the Championship in that division. In the Championship class:

- 1st place ponies will be asked to line up on the front line.
- 2nd place ponies stand directly behind the 1st place pony that placed above them in their class.

In most cases, ponies do not need to move out again, unless the judge requests it.

- **Step 2: Championship to Grand Championship**

If your pony wins Champion or Reserve Champion (1st or 2nd) in a Championship class, you are now eligible to compete in the Grand Championship, if one is offered for that division. Line-up works the same as before: 1st place in front, 2nd place directly behind.

- **Step 3: Supreme Championship (Welsh Only)**

For Welsh ponies, the Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion from each Grand Championship class will move forward to the Supreme Championship. Again, the line-up is: 1st place in front, 2nd place directly behind.



2025 Western Canadian Pony Classic Supreme & Reserve Supreme Welsh Champion Arnaby Ted E. with his owner/handler, Samantha Eidsness.
PC: M. Tanney

Double-Judged Classes

Most of our in-hand classes are double-judged and both judges' 1st and 2nd placed ponies are eligible to move on to the championship classes.

One judge will judge their Championship first — their ponies will line up, while the others wait inside the ring near the fence.

Once the first judge is done, their ponies will move to the fence and the second judge's group will line up and be judged in the same way.

IN-HAND DIVISIONS

M&M In-hand Classes - NEW FOR 2026

M&M stands for Mountain & Moorland and refers to native British pony breeds. Ponies are generally split by small and large breed, as well as age. Here are the size categories:

Small Breed M&M

Dartmoor, Exmoor, Shetland, Welsh A, Welsh B

Large Breed M&M

Connemara, Dales, Fell, Highland, New Forest, Welsh C, Welsh D

Ponies must be registered with their respective breed society. To be shown at a walk and trot only. Ponies and cobs may be shown with full, natural or evened, unbraided mane and tail. Ponies are judged on conformation, breed type and movement. This division is single judged.

Pony Hunter Breeding

The Pony Hunter Breeding classes are for young stock ages 3 years and under. Classes are generally divided by age and gender. To be shown at a walk and trot only. Ponies will be judged based on their quality, conformation, movement, suitability as a future hunter pony and breeding animal to produce future hunter ponies. Open to all breeds, registered or non-registered but should be of hunter type. This division is double-judged and ponies are often shown braided in this division.

Sport Pony & Sport Pony Star Search Classes (qualifiers for the Royal Winter Fair)

Sport Pony classes are open to ponies of all ages. Classes are generally divided by age and gender. To be shown at a walk and trot only. Ponies will be judged on movement and conformation/type. Sport ponies should be capable of excelling in the hunter, jumper, eventing or dressage disciplines. Open to all breeds, registered or non-registered but should be of sport type. Sport pony and Sport Pony Star Search classes are run concurrently and ponies are often shown braided in this division. Ponies placing first in their class under the Sport Pony Star Search judge will qualify for the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, provided that there are two or more ponies competing in the class.



Bashkir Curly competing in the Sport Pony Star Search qualifying classes. PC: M.Tanney

Welsh Breed Classes

Welsh classes are open only to Welsh ponies and cobs registered with the WPCSC or the WPCSA. Classes are generally divided by age and gender. To be shown at a walk and trot only. Purebred Welsh to be judged on breed type, conformation, way of going, quality and substance and disposition and manners. Natural reaching action is desired. Half-Welsh to be judged on conformation, way of going, quality and substance and on Welsh breed type, disposition and manners. Ponies and cobs may be shown with full, natural or evened, unbraided mane and tail. One single braid just behind the ear is permissible. Braiding is optional for Section B ponies. This division is double judged.

Welsh Champion of Champions Qualifier

These three classes are held after all Welsh classes have been run. Winners from each Welsh purebred class are eligible to compete in the corresponding Welsh Champion of Champions class. These are qualifying classes and the three winners are eligible to compete at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

National Dressage Pony Cup Breeding Classes

There are two divisions of Dressage Breeding classes: Pony – open to all pony breeds, registered or non-registered that are 14.2hh or under and Small Horse- open to all horse breeds, registered or non-registered that are over 14.2hh but under 16hh. Both divisions to be shown at a walk and trot only. To be shown on the triangle. Animals will be judged on movement and conformation/type and should be capable of excelling in dressage. This division is single judged and ponies are often shown braided in this division.



Highland Pony competing in the NDPC Dressage Breeding classes. PC: M.Tanney

If you have any questions about in-hand showing that have not been covered here, please contact us. We'd be happy to answer your questions! poshaltashows@gmail.com