

A Guide to Working Hunter Classes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Working hunter classes are a great opportunity for competitors to demonstrate that they have the versatility required of both horse and rider on the hunting field.

As such, a working hunter should be a good, strong type of horse, with true hunter conformation. He must display good manners at all times and is required to demonstrate good, bold jumping ability, whilst jumping smoothly and quietly. He should possess sound paces, appear to be a comfortable ride over long distances and, in addition, be a good looking, handsome horse.

There are three phases contained within the working hunter class.

- 1) Jumping Phase;
- 2) Flatwork Phase
- 3) Conformation Phase.

These phases may be judged in three separate phases, or combined, depending on the preference of the Judge on the day.

At the completion of the class, the total scores from all phases are added together to produce a mark out of one hundred. Places are awarded according to these final scores and as such, the competitor with the highest mark will be the eventual winner. In the event of equality of marks, the Judge will choose a winner from the two highest placed horses. The Judge's decision in all cases is final.

2. JUMPING EQUIPMENT

A full working hunter jumping course should include a minimum of two and a maximum of five jumping efforts.

Working hunter jumps should emulate obstacles which a rider would expect to encounter on the hunt field. As such, the fences should appear as natural as possible, being rustic, well filled and, if possible, not brightly painted. Ground lines are essential and the course must be set in such a way as to encourage a free, flowing and forward round.

Jumps must be constructed with safety in mind. For example: jumps such as gates must be constructed in such a way that if a horse was to leave a foot between the rails, it can easily be withdrawn. The use of jump wings is to be encouraged.

There are many ways to set up a working hunter course. For example, jumps may be set out around the perimeter of the arena in a circle and may be jumped more than once (if required) in each competition. It is preferable, however, for jumps to be set also across the centre of the ring to allow the introduction of a figure of eight within the course. Regardless of size, each course should include a change of direction.

3. WORKING HUNTER PHASES

3.1 Marks

Overall allocation of marks:

Jumping: style and ability 50 points

Flatwork 30 points

Conformation 20 points

TOTAL 100 points

3.2.1 Jumping Phase

Competitors are required to negotiate a rustic course comprising of no more than five jumping efforts, to be ridden at a controlled hunting pace.

During competition, competitors should enter and present themselves to the Judge or the Steward in charge of the event to accept their starting orders. The Judge will alert the competitor, with a wave of the Judge's hand that they may begin their round. No jumps may be jumped prior to a competitor receiving instruction from the Judge.

A Judge may request that competitors show a gallop before, within or after their jumping round. This will be at the discretion of the Judge.

The fall of any jump rail (even if the top rail remains) or filler will be counted as a fault if it happens at the time that the horse is jumping the fence.

A fall of horse or rider in the Jumping Phases will result in elimination.

Riders must halt at the end of their round and acknowledge the Judge.

Depending on time, and the number of final placings, the judge may request that only those horses with clear rounds/or those horses with most points will go forward for the flatwork phase. Again, dependant on how the judge chooses to organise the running of the class. (ie if 6 places, the judge may choose only the top scoring 7 horses, or those with clear rounds etc may go forward for the flat work phase.)

3.2.2 Marks for the Jumping Phase:

The Judge will mark each competitor's jump round out of (50).

This mark will be formulated not only on the basis of whether or not the competitor knocked any rails, but will also take into consideration manners, style, pace, control etc shown by each combination while jumping.

The following marks are to be deducted as such:

JUMPING FAULTS:

1 ST Rail down or refusal	10 POINTS
2 ND Rail down or refusal	20 POINTS
3 rd Rail down	20 POINTS
3 rd Refusal	Elimination

3.2.3 Heights of Jumps

Classes should be divided according to the heights of jumps. Recommended jump heights are below.

Maximum Height of Jumps (cm)

35cm

(restricted to horses under 12hh)

NOVICE WORKING HUNTER: 50cm

INTERMEDIATE WORKING HUNTER: 65cm
OPEN WORKING HUNTER: 80cm

3.4.1. Flat work

For the Flatwork Phase of a working hunter class, a Judge will prescribe an individual more free flowing workout than that of a show horse class and/or may work competitors together on the ring with a change of rein. Show Hunter workouts are encouraged to be more straight lines and diagonals than circles.

A fall of horse or rider in this Phase will result in elimination.

Competitors eliminated in the Jumping Phase will not be required for the Flat work phase

3.4.2 Marks for the Flat work Phase

A mark out of 30 will be given for the Flatwork based on the Judge's assessment of the horse's manners, movement and general impression (presentation/correct attire.

3.5.1 Conformation Phase

A Judge will assess the conformation of each horse keeping in mind the characteristics required in a true hunter type.

In the judge's opinion, horses which are not of true hunter type, will not score well for conformation.

Where possible, a Judge should request that a horse be stripped of its tack to help conclude an accurate conformation mark, however, horses may be assessed on conformation under saddle, should time be a factor.

3.5.2 Marks for the Conformation Phase:

The Judge will award a final mark out of 20 to each horse for their conformation and type.

4. TURNOUT FOR HORSE AND RIDER

Turnout for working hunter classes is similar to a show hunter class, **(please refer to "Guide to Dress and Turnout in the Hunter Ring")** however an all purpose or jumping saddle may be worn.

All horses/ponies are to be ridden in a simple biting such as a simple snaffle, double or Pelham with either double or split reins (either is permissible especially for children.) Bits such as gags, tongue ties or any specialised types of biting for control are not permissible.

Whips must be a maximum length of 75cm excluding the thong and/or lash if a hunt whip is carried.

No bearing reins, side or running reins of any kind are permitted.

A correctly fitted running martingale is allowed in the jumping section, (however it will be at the Judge's discretion whether this may or may not be marked down).

- Protective boots (horse) are permissible for the Jumping Phase ONLY.
- No change of saddlery is allowed between, or during, phases, except for the removal of boots and running martingale for the flatwork and Conformation Phases. Competitors should ensure a groom is on hand to remove these as quickly as possible.
- All competitors are to wear an approved safety helmet with chin strap.

5. GENERAL NOTES FOR COMPETITORS AND JUDGES

It is expected that riders should demonstrate control over their mount **at all times** and be able to turn and reduce pace smoothly and within a short time. This is because, on the hunt field, it is necessary for riders to be able to pull up quickly if there is an unforeseen hazard. The horse should give the appearance of being pleasant to ride.

Evenness of pace:

- A fluid, smooth jumping round, ridden at a fair pace will earn high points for style, manners and presence.
- The jumping course should ideally be completed at a strong canter, but NOT a gallop.
- Excessive checking before fences should be marked down as this will alter the clarity and evenness of pace.
- Safety should always be taken into account in all phases of a working hunter class.

Correct Jumping Style:

- Clean, clear and smooth jumping is the desirable base from which to Judge.
- Poor jumping style, propping into fences, lack of control etc. should receive low marks for jumping style.
- The aim of stylish jumping is to have the fence in the middle with takeoff and landing neither too far away or too close to the fence.
- Judges should look for a horse with good bascule over fences, balance, rhythm, impulsion, manners and safety of the ride;
- It should be considered a greater fault if a horse or pony raps a fence with its front feet as opposed to a rap with the hind feet.
- A Judge should severely penalise faults which may present a danger to horse and/or rider.

Straight Jumping:

- A veering horse on the hunt field puts other horses and riders around it at risk and should be penalised.

Leaving the Ring:

Once competition commences, competitors and/or horses are **NOT permitted to leave the ring FOR ANY REASON**. Failure to comply will result in elimination.

Manners:

If at any stage the Judge feels a horse is **not under sufficient control** or if a horse refuses to stand or displays any mannerisms contrary to the conduct that is required of a hunter, it is at the Judge's discretion that the horse may be asked to leave the ring thus resulting in ELIMINATION from the event.

© Samantha Watson and Celia Warren 2010 (authors)

All content on this website is protected by copyright laws and, unless otherwise indicated, is the property of the S amantha Watson.

Commercial use of material on this website is prohibited without the express, written permission of Samantha Watson. This includes use of, or reference to, or materials contained on this website..

Samantha Watson permits the copying, downloading, or other use of materials on this website only for the purposes of:

- educational purposes;

- non-commercial use;

- personal use; and

- as permitted under Australian copyright laws.

Commercial use of material on this website is prohibited without the express, written permission of Samantha Watson.