

USEF CARRIAGE PLEASURE DRIVING

DRIVEN DRESSAGE BOOKLET



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DRIVEN DRESSAGE OVERVIEW

The objective of a Driven Dressage Test is to measure the athletic ability of the horse when judged on freedom, regularity of paces, harmony, impulsion, suppleness, lightness, ease of movement and correction bending of the horses on the move. They are also judged on style, accuracy, and general control of their horses, as well as their dress, condition of their harness and carriage with the presentation of their entire turnout.

Driven dressage is dressage in harness. The same principles as with regular dressage, driven dressage demands a high degree of training, suppleness, obedience, and safety. Correct form and pace must be maintained through all movements including the horse being on the bit and being correctly positioned. Cadence and impulsion should be maintained throughout the test. Not as well-known as other Equine sports, Driven dressage, is an FEI recognized sport, with the FEI providing international level tests.

Dressage is the harmonious development of the physique and abilities of the horse through proper training. With progressive training the horse becomes calm, supple, and flexible, giving the horse confidence, attentiveness, and a sharper edge in his work. The qualities that are revealed include the freedom and regularity of paces; harmony, lightness, and easy movement; lightness on the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters. This encourages lively impulsion and the acceptance of the bridle, without any tenseness or resistance. A confident and attentive horse submits to the driver while remaining straight in movement on a straight line and bending accordingly when moving on a curved line. The walk is free, regular, and unconstrained. The trot is free, supple, regular, sustaining, and active. With the horse having impulsion he should be free from resistance and will obey without hesitation, responding to the various aids calmly and with precision, displaying a natural and harmonious balance physically and mentally. During the horse's work, even when halting, the horse should be on the bit. A horse is on the bit when the hocks are correctly placed, the neck is more or less raised and arched to the stage of training and the extension/collection of the pace. The horse should accept the bridle with a light and soft contact and submissiveness throughout the exercise. The horse's head should remain in a steady position, slightly in front of the vertical, with a supple poll as the highest point of the neck with no resistance offered to the driver.

OBJECT AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The object of dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete, maximizing its natural talent through harmonious education. Correct dressage training will make a horse calm, willing, supple, forward, and balanced, while also confident, attentive, and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the driver.
2. These qualities are demonstrated by:
 - The freedom and regularity of the gaits
 - A desire to go forward with energy, while maintaining longitudinal and lateral balance
 - The harmony, lightness, and ease of the movements
 - The acceptance of the aids without resistance or tension
3. The walk is regular, free, and unconstrained. The trot is free, supple, regular, and active. The hindquarters are never inactive or sluggish.
4. Cadence, shown in the trot, is the result of the horse moving with well-marked regularity, impulsion, and balance. Cadence should be maintained in all the different trot exercises and variations.
5. Impulsion is the transmission of an eager, yet controlled, propulsive energy generated from the hindquarters through the horse's soft, swinging back into an elastic contact with the driver's hands. Impulsion is a precondition for collection.
6. With a lively impulsion and suppleness of the joints, free from the paralyzing effects of resistance, the horse obeys willingly and without hesitation. It responds to the various aids calmly and with precision, while remaining confident and balanced.
7. In all work, including the halt, the horse must remain on the aids, accepting the bit with light, consistent, submissive contact. The head should remain in a steady position, as a rule with the nose slightly in front of the vertical. A supple poll should, at most times, be the highest point of the neck.
8. Submission/willing cooperation does not imply subservience, but rather obedience through the attention,

willingness, and confidence of the horse. The horse is a willing partner displaying harmony, lightness, and ease in the execution of the different movements.

9. A lack of submission/willing cooperation may be manifested by resistance to, or evasion of, the contact; being either 'above the bit' or 'behind the bit'. It may also take the form of nervousness or tension or stiffness in the horse's back and joints. Submission/willing cooperation demonstrates the horse's understanding of what is being asked and its confidence to react to the aids without fear or tension.

DRESSAGE ARENA

The large Driven Dressage Arena must be 100m long and 40m wide. The small arena is 80m long and 40m wide. The correct arena size will be printed on the test. An exercise area must be provided far enough away so as not to disturb the competitors during their tests.

REGULATIONS

- Scribes: Management must provide a scribe for the judge in all driven dressage classes.
- Facility Requirements/Considerations: The Driven Dressage arena should be on as level ground as possible. The arena should be separated from the public by a distance of at least 5 meters. 10 if possible. Details for setting up the arena's letters, centerline, etc. are included in Chapter CP of the current USEF Rule Book. There are two sizes of arenas as follows:
 - Small Arena – 80 meters long and 40 meters wide
 - Large Arena – 100 meters long and 40 meters wide
- The arena measurements are made on the inside of the arena
- The small arena may be used for all tests and the large arena may be used for multiples.
- An exercise area, of sufficient size for several competitors to prepare at the same time, must be provided far enough away from the arena so as not to disturb the competitors during their tests.

MOVEMENTS AND PACES

The following are the paces and movements that are called for in driven dressage tests.

1. The Halt: The horse should stand attentive, motionless, and straight, with the weight evenly distributed over all four legs. If a multiple, all must be square and aligned with one another. The horse may quietly champ the bit, while maintaining light contact with the driver's hand, and should be ready to move off at the slightest indication. The halt is obtained by the displacement of the horse's weight on the quarters by properly used aids, driving the horse forward toward a restraining but allowing hand, causing an almost instantaneous but not abrupt halt from the previously fixed pace.
2. Free Walk: The free walk is a pace of relaxation in which the horse is allowed the freedom to lower and stretch out his head and neck to the utmost. The reins must be long enough to allow for this stretch; however, they should not be loose enough to loop. It is desirable that the hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the footprints of the fore feet (overtracking).
3. Working Walk: A regular and unconstrained walk. The horse should walk energetically but calmly with even and determined steps with distinct, marked four equally spaced beats. The driver should maintain light and steady contact with the horse's mouth (on the bit). The horse's hind feet should at least step into the prints of the fore feet.
4. Lengthened Walk: This is a more determined and ground-covering walk than the working walk. The main difference between the free walk and the lengthened walk is that the driver now actively asks the horse to produce more push from behind and thus lengthen his stride. The horse must flex his poll somewhat and is expected to work into the bit on a soft contact. The horse should not stretch as long and as low as in the free walk but must show a definite lengthening and lowering of the frame compared to the working walk. Some overtrack is expected.
5. The Working Trot: A regular and unconstrained trot, in which a horse, even if not yet trained and ready for collected movements, shows himself properly balanced and remaining on the bit, goes forward with even

elastic steps and good hock action. The expression (good hock action) means here a free and energetic forward swing of the hind legs with hocks brought well forward underneath the horse's body, aiding in his free forward movement.

6. The Collected Trot: In the collected trot the horse is expected to move with more impulsion and engagement than in the working trot. Therefore, his haunches must be more compressed, his loins more strongly coiled, and his croup lowered. As a result, the horse's neck and head will be raised higher and his center of balance will be shifted permanently more towards the rear, thus enabling the shoulders to move with greater ease and freedom. As the horse's frame is shorter than in other trots, his steps will also be shorter but must be more elevated, and he appears lighter and more mobile throughout. Hollowing and/or stiffening the back are severe faults. Only a moderate degree of collection should be expected from a driving horse.
7. Lengthen Stride in The Trot: This trot is used as a preparation for the extended trot. While maintaining the same rhythm, the horse covers more ground than in the working trot. He must lengthen and lower the frame and stride while remaining on contact.
8. The Extended Trot: The horse covers as much ground as possible. Maintaining the same rhythm, he lengthens his step to the utmost as a result of great impulsion from the hindquarters. The driver allows the horse, remaining on the bit to lower and extend his neck to prevent his action from becoming higher.
9. The Rein Back: The rein back is a backward movement in which the feet are raised and set down simultaneously by diagonal pairs. The feet should be well raised, and the hind feet remain well in line. At the preceding halt as well as during the rein back, the horse, although standing motionless and moving back respectively, should remain on the bit, maintaining his desire to move forward. Anticipation or precipitation of the movement, resistance to or evasion of the hand, deviation of the quarters from the straight line, spreading or inactive hind legs and dragging fore feet are serious faults. If, in a dressage test, a trot is required after a rein back, the horse should move off immediately into his pace, without a halt or intermediate step.
10. The Transitions: The changes of pace should be clearly shown when the horse's nose arrives at the prescribed marker; they should be quickly made yet must be smooth and not abrupt. The rhythm of a pace should be maintained up to the moment the pace is changed or the horse halts. The horse should remain light in hand, calm and maintain a correct position. In the lower levels, transitions from trot to halt and from halt to trot may be executed progressively through the walk by making two or three well defined walk steps.
11. Half Halt: The half-halt is a hardly visible, almost simultaneous, coordinated action of the aids, (voice, whip, and hands of the driver), with the object of increasing the attention and balance of the horse before the execution of several movements or transitions to lesser and higher paces. In shifting slightly more weight onto the horse's quarters the engagement of the hind legs and the balance on the haunches are facilitated for the benefit of the lightness of the forehand and the horse's balance as a whole.
12. Changes of Direction: At the changes of direction, the horse should adjust the bend of his body to the curvature of the line he follows, remaining supple and following the indications of the driver without resistance or change of pace, rhythm, or speed.
13. Serpentine: These are a series of half circles from one side of the arena to the other, connected by straight lines. Starting and finishing by driving into the corners is incorrect. The number of loops is prescribed in the tests.
14. Figure of Eight: This figure consists of two exact circles of equal size as prescribed in the test, joined at the center of the eight. The horse should straighten an instant before changing direction at the center of the figure.
15. Half-Circle: This movement consists of a half-circle of stated diameter followed by a return to the original track on a straight line. In a pair or four-in- hand, the pole should touch the centerline briefly at the end of the half circle before returning to the track on a straight line.
16. The Deviation: A gradual movement away from the long side of the arena to reach a maximum value prescribed with a gradual movement back to the track.

THE LEVELS

Levels of Driven Dressage used at national competitions Training, preliminary, intermediate, and advanced are the four levels of Driven Dressage. The tests are required to be driving from memory, except in training level tests, where the tests may be called. The following is the description of the required paced and movements for the four levels.

TRAINING LEVEL TESTS:

The purpose of these tests is to establish that the correct foundation is being laid for the training of the driving horse requiring the green horse to move freely forward in a free walk on long rein and the working trot, in rhythm while accepting the bit with relaxation, through transitions and 40m circles. This level is also intended to encourage inexperienced drivers.

PRELIMINARY LEVEL TESTS:

The purpose of these tests is to establish that the horse has acquired a degree of balance and suppleness in addition to the rhythmical, free forward motion expected at the Training Level. While consistently accepting the bit the horse exhibits more activity of the haunches in the working trot and lengthened walk. To be demonstrated in: 30m circles, 20m half-circles, serpentines, lengthened trot and stretching the frame.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TESTS:

The purpose of these tests is to establish that the horse has become more freely forward with greater use of the haunches than at the Preliminary level, while remaining light in hand without resistance. To be demonstrated in the working walk and trot, the lengthened trot, collected trot, the 5 second halt, the rein back, and the serpentine.

FIGURES

1. Serpentine: This is a series of half-circles from one side of the arena to the other, connected by straight lines. Starting and finishing by driving into the corners is incorrect. The number of loops is prescribed in the tests.
2. Figure of eight: This figure consists of two exact circles of equal size as prescribed in the test, joined at the center of the eight. The horse should straighten an instant before changing direction at the center of the figure.
3. Half-circle: This movement consists of a half-circle of stated diameter followed by a return to the original track on a straight line. In a pair or four-in-hand, the pole should touch the centerline briefly at the end of the half circle before returning to the track on a straight line.
4. The deviation: A gradual movement away from the long side of the arena to reach a maximum value prescribed with a gradual movement back to the track.

LINK TO THE TESTS:

<https://www.usef.org/compete/disciplines/carriage-pleasure-driving>

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