

Dress for Dressage

By Connie Wyatt
Dressage Committee Chair

Whether you are going to a rally, to USPC Championships, or to an open dressage competition, knowing the correct clothes to wear is important. Knowing the correct dress code for Pony Club is important for a few obvious reasons. First, the rules of the discipline are clearly spelled out on page 31 of the Horse Management rulebook, but there are always new clothes and accessories that come out between the time the rule book is revised. Not having the correct turn-out for a rally could cost a point or two; not having the correct turn out at an open dressage competition could cause you to feel a bit out of place.

First, let's go over the guidelines for formal dress.

- *The pants can be white, canary, tan or buff.*
- *The shirt must be a white riding shirt with long or short sleeves.*
- *The jacket must be a solid color (no stripes), either black, blue, dark gray, or hunt colors.*
- *Boots must be tall dress boots or field boots. Paddock boots with matching full grain, smooth leather half chaps or leggings are also allowed.*
- *Helmets must be black or have a black cover on them.*
- *Belts must be worn if your pants have belt loops.*
- *Gloves are optional. If you do wear them they must be black, brown or white.*
- *Neckwear may be a white stock tie (pre tied is ok), with a plain pin.*

Now here is something different: This year you may wear the new ruffle tie, which is easy to put on and very light weight for hot weather. Those going to Kentucky will appreciate this. Although you may see an ascot type pin being used at recognized dressage competitions on these ties, you must still wear a plain pin with these in Pony Club competitions.

Next let's review the informal guidelines:

- *Pants may be any conservative color. If you wear jodhpurs you need to wear paddock boots with garters or pant clips*
- *Shirts must have a collar, long or short sleeves. It can be a riding shirt, dress shirt or turtleneck.*
- *The jacket may be any color or pattern except solid black.*
- *Neck wear may be a choker, stock tie or neck tie. If you are wearing a turtleneck you do not have to wear anything over it. Plain stock pin is optional. Gentlemen can wear a necktie. They must be a plain dark color or white. A tack pin can be used to hold them in place.*
- *Boots may be an appropriate mounted foot wear. You may wear tall boots, brown or black, paddock boots same colors or paddock boots with full-grain smooth leather half chaps or leggings.*
- *Helmets maybe black or any conservative color*

- *Belts and gloves are the same as formal.*

Now that you have an idea of the combinations of clothes that go together don't forget some of the small details. Your hair is a good place to start. Girls with long hair or gentlemen who like to wear their hair long, should use hair nets. This goes for any show you may attend. The last thing the judge wants to see is your hair hanging down. It is distracting and may take their attention away from your performance. Braids are acceptable as well.

Something I learned is that Show Bows with clips are allowed at rallies. This makes the hair problem much easier to deal with. I do suggest that you work all this out ahead of time, so when you arrive at your rally you are not trying things for the first time.

Pony Club competitions are not the places to show off your jewelry. You may wear:

- *A watch,*
- *A pair of very small stud earrings*
- *Your Pony Club pin, of course.*
- *You may also wear a medical necklace or bracelet or your wedding band.*

Jewelry is not allowed in the airways, nose, lips or tongue. Remember all of these rules are put in place for your safety. The rules for jewelry are good ones to follow any time you ride. Make sure when you arrive at the rally you have a helmet that meets all the requirements. First and most important they have to fit. If you are not sure how to do it that you have an experienced club member help you get that right. There is nothing worse than getting to a rally, not have your helmet fit and being told you cannot use it the way it is. That is very stressful. If this does happen, the HM judges can not fit your helmet for you. Only the adult responsible can do that. It is best to do it at home.

Also, your helmet must have a manufacturer's label and a label that shows it meets the ASTM /SEI standards. Before you leave home, make sure all these requirements are met. Again, this is for your safety.

Finally, short shorts and jeans are not permitted for jog-outs. You may wear slacks, skirts or riding pants for this. Although walking shorts are permitted, be careful they are not too short. Again this is representation of you, your horse, and your club or region.

Horse Management has changed slightly this year. Some things that we all knew to be required before are no longer. Such as wearing spurs to Turn Out or Safety Inspections, but no mention of when you have to take them off. Check with your chief at the rallies and have them explain these new rules, so you can know what is expected. They really want to see you be safe and have fun. Remember, dressage is a very traditional discipline. You want to turn yourself and your horse out in a way that is respectful to the judge and in a way that makes you and your club proud. A judge can tell how much preparation you have put into the competition by the way you have turned your self out. It makes a difference and will make you feel good about the effort you have made.

I hope to see some of you in Kentucky this year. I will be looking at how well you all have turned your selves out. Good luck!