

Horse Care Expectations at US Pony Club Championships

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Upon Arrival: When you arrive at championships, the first step will be to set up your horse's stall. This will include:

- **Removing any staples and nails from the stall area.** It is important to remove **these** to prevent injury to the horse, and is most easily accomplished prior to laying down bedding, because any dropped nails will be easier to find.
- **Bedding the stall.** You will need to make sure that you provide plenty of bedding for your horse. You can bring your own, or if you are traveling a long distance, bedding is available on the competition grounds. Check to see what bedding is acceptable for the facility at which you will be staying. *(In 2008, there will be shavings available for purchase onsite- generally around \$6.00 each)*
- **Hanging the water/ feed buckets.** Two water buckets are needed and should be hung with natural bailing twine; nylon twine (usually red or yellow) can be used but does not have breakaway capability.

The buckets must be hung at your horse's chest height so that the horse cannot get a hoof caught, and it is best to use at least two loops of twine, as water buckets are heavy and you won't want a flooded stall!

If you plan to put electrolytes in your water, you must have one bucket of plain water and one with electrolytes, the latter of which must be labeled as containing electrolytes.

The same is true of feed buckets, which must be large enough that the horse is able to get their head in easily. If your horse has special needs, i.e.: they need a feed tub on the ground, special arrangements will need to be made with individual HM for each rally, and it is a good idea to have an extra five gallon bucket on hand just in case a tub is not accepted.

Round buckets, which are often used for feed, must have two points of attachment, while flat-back buckets only need one.

Attaching a stall card. You will be required to place a stall card on the front of your horse's stall. This needs to have all of your contact information, as well as information on your horse. Any special conditions need to be noted so that Horse Management is aware of your horse's background in case of an emergency. A sample of a stall card can be found in the appendices of

the Horse Management Rulebook, Appendix I, pages 105-106 and also on the Pony Club website under forms ('Stall card').

- **Lead Rope:** You must hang your lead on the stall door where it is easily accessible and can be grabbed quickly in an emergency. You can loop it through a ring of twine if you like.
- **Hanging of fans.** Because Championship takes place during summer, it is usually very hot and humid. Most competitors choose to hang a box fan on the front of their stalls which can be used to keep the horse cool and comfortable during down times. Fans must be turned off when the horse is out of the stall, and unplugged at night. You will need to check with your Horse Management judges to determine how to properly and safely hang your fan. Bring extra bungee cords, plastic ties, and a ladder to set up your fan (parents may help with this during move in).
- **Write the stall number on halters.** Your horse must have their stall number on their halter, usually applied with masking tape and a marker. This will ensure that if your horse should make an escape, someone will be able to catch them and return them to their stall. For this reason, halters must be left on at all times unless special permission has been given by the Chief HM Judge (make sure to note this on the stall card).
- **Turning in medications and veterinarian notes.** If your horse will require any medications, a note from your veterinarian must accompany them and both must be turned in to the Horse Management office upon arrival at the competition and before the Competitor Briefing. An example can be found in the 2007 Horse Management Rulebook, Appendix F, page 101. Very important: all medications must be given while supervised by a Horse Management Judge.

Equine Preparation for formals:

- **Bathing:** Most facilities have a designated area for washing your horse. You will need to find out where this is and comply with the rules of your Horse Management and the facility.
- **Grooming/ Presentation of horse:** Your horse must be groomed to the standard of your rating. Pride should be taken in your turnout at formals, and a glittering clean, dandruff free horse will make a great impression on your examiner. Your stable manager can accompany you and help give your horse a final look over before your formal, making sure that your horse has not collected dust, stepped in manure, or become dirty in any other way on the trip to the formal stations.

Prior to competition:

- **Tacking up:** Although your tack will already have been inspected for safety, each time you tack up you will need to make sure that everything fits your horse properly and that nothing is pinching or causing your horse discomfort in any way.
- **Safety Check:** Your Horse Management judges will designate an area for safety checks and you will need to report there before each ride. You should present a clean, well cared for horse

with well-adjusted, clean tack. This will show your judges that you respect them and yourself and that you take pride in your **appearance** and your horse's.

During warm up:

- You will need to thoroughly warm up your horse prior to competition to prevent any injury. You will need to keep in mind the weather also. If it is hot and humid, you should monitor your horse to make sure that they do not get overheated. Be considerate and aware of other riders and follow the basic guidelines for riding in a group, keeping plenty of space between horses, and watching the other riders to prevent cutting them off.

After Competition:

- When you are done competing, your horse must be properly cooled out. Walk them back to their stalls and un-tack. If they require hosing, you can take them to the wash racks and hose them off, making sure to scrape the hot water off as you go, since their excess body heat will be absorbed into the water. If hot water is left on them, they will not cool down. If they do not need hosing, make sure that you thoroughly brush out any sweat marks and remove dirt from the legs and belly.
- **Turn Backs:** You will have a turn back in which a HM judge will inspect your horse to be sure that they have been cooled out and that all sweat and debris has been removed from their coat. They will also check to see that the horse's feet have been picked out. Turnbacks should be completed within approximately an hour after you return to the barn and before you leave the stabling area.
- **Wrapping:** If your horse's legs require bandaging after competitions, you will need to sign up in the HM stall and your wraps must be inspected by a HM judge for safety. In Pony Club bandages are left on for no longer than twelve hours.

During down times:

- **Cleaning stalls:** You will need to check your horse's stall throughout the day. If you notice that they have soiled it in anyway, it will require picking out, and a good thorough cleaning once a day.
- **Water:** Be sure that your horse's water buckets stay full and clean throughout the day.

In the morning:

- When you arrive in the morning, you will need to complete your morning chores. These include feeding your horse, cleaning their stall, and dumping and refreshing their water buckets. Remove the top-off buckets from the aisle and stow them in your tack room or feed stall. You can ask a teammate to walk your horse for you while you clean your stall, which will make it easier for you to work and will allow your horse to stretch his legs after being stalled all night.

At night:

- Before leaving at night, you will need to take care of your evening chores and make sure that your horse is comfortable and happy for the night. This will consist of topping off water buckets, filling top off buckets to be placed before each stall, and giving stalls a final cleaning. You should give your horse their evening feed and make sure that any special needs, such as bandaging, have been met. Make sure before you leave for the night that your fans are turned off and unplugged, and that there is no way that a sneaky horse can pull the cord into their stall. Tidy up your tack room, hang your pinnies, and empty the trash.

The final day/ Move out:

- **The Tack Room:** During the last day of championships, you should begin gathering your things together and straightening up your tack room. Pack up as many of your belongings as possible. It is a good idea to bring a trunk or a large plastic box where you can keep your smaller items such as horse boots, crops, bandages, etc so that you are able to keep them together and out of the way when not in use, Not only will this help to keep your tack stall tidy during the rally, but it will also make it easier to ensure that none of your items mysteriously walk off.

On the last day there is often a period between your last turn backs and awards when you will have some down time. If your HM judges will allow it, it is a good idea to tear down your tack room and pack as much as possible during this time, adding things like saddle pads and bridles, and girths to your box so that the only things left out are large items (i.e.: saddles, tack boxes, your boots, wash buckets, etc.) You can then move your things to one corner of the tack room so that everything is together and ready to be moved out. By doing this, you will avoid the mad rush that accompanies move out, in which many items are mistakenly picked up by a teammate, never to be seen again. If your entire team organizes their own things early, then it will be clear whose is whose and you will greatly reduce the risk of losing your personal objects. Also, label anything you think may be accidentally taken. If your name is on it and it does go home with a team mate, they will know whose it is and can make arrangements to get it back to you.

Make sure that you leave the Equine First Aid Kit, Utility Kit and Human First Aid Kit easily accessible at all times.

- **The Stall:** Many facilities do not require you to strip your stall at the end of the event, and some give the option of stripping it yourself or paying a small fee and they will do it for you. At Championship you must strip your stall before leaving the grounds and then get it checked by Horse Management. It is a good idea to bring along a heavy plastic tarp as it is much easier to make two trips to the dumping site with the tarp than to make ten with a bucket. You cannot strip the stall or move the horse out until rally is completely over. It will be easier if the horse is out of the way.

The simplest way to achieve this is to have a parent hold your horse outside while you muck the stall, or to load them on the trailer if you are going to be quick. Stripping should be the very last thing you do, so that the horse is able to remain in the comfort of the stall for as long as possible. Don't forget to take your water and feed buckets! Cut down the twine you used to hang them so that you leave the stall in good shape for its next occupant.

- Once everything has been stored away on the trailer, the horse safely loaded, and the stall properly dealt with, take one last look around to be certain that there is nothing that has been overlooked. Congratulations, you've made it through Championships!

A special thanks to Jessica submitting this article!

Jessica joined Keeneland Pony Club five years ago after moving to Nicholasville, KY. Pony Club introduced her to the horse sports of eventing, mounted games, and vaulting and she became very active in all of them. She soon began eventing on her 18 year-old Arabian who had no jumping experience. After competing with him for two years, she moved onto a 7 year-old thoroughbred mare who was just beginning her eventing career. The pair attended Pony Club Championships for novice level in 2006 and place 5th. They are currently competing at training level with hopes of moving up to preliminary in the fall. After being introduced to games through Pony Club and attending Championships for games 3 years in a row, Jessica became very involved with the United States Mounted Games Association and has since had the opportunity to compete in Germany and France. She plans to attend the University of Kentucky in the fall as an animal science major in their pre-vet program.

