

**NORTH CAROLINA  
4-H HORSE PROGRAM  
BASIC DRESSAGE MANUAL**

**Dressage**



**Combined Training**

*The NC 4-H Dressage Division is an invitational division open to any NC 4-H member that possesses a current horse project eligibility card.*



Revised 2015

# Table of Contents

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Objectives .....	1
The Levels .....	1
Terminology .....	2
Procedural Notes .....	2
Scoring the Dressage Test .....	3
Attire and Tack .....	3
Stadium Jumping	
Arena.....	5
The Course.....	5
Scoring the Combined Test .....	6
Check-In Procedures.....	7
Championship Tie-Breakers and Awards.....	8
Entry Information .....	8
Appendix .....	9
Dressage Tack	
• Permitted Bits	
• Permitted Nosebands	
Dressage Arenas	

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# Introduction

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Dressage is often referred to as ballet on horseback. It is the uniting of rider and mount to produce pure movement, balance and harmony. Dressage is multi-discipline and can be as basic as elementary equitation patterns and as complex as working cow horse patterns. Flexibility of body and mind are required of both horse and rider. As the dressage levels progress so do the demands put on the horse and rider. At the introductory levels transitions, accuracy and balance are emphasized. In the higher levels more difficult movements are prescribed that require complete harmony between the horse and rider. The most important things to remember about dressage are 1) it is fun 2) it is multi-discipline. Each ride is evaluated against a standard for each individual test, not against each rider in a division.

## Objectives of Dressage

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The object of dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete through harmonious education. As a result, it makes the horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the rider.

## The Levels

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**Introductory Level:** Tests consist of Walk-Trot work, transitions from each and the halt. This is a good level to begin at especially for Junior and Short Stirrup riders.

**Training Level:** Introduces the horse and rider to the basic principle of dressage competition. Transitions are gradual, circles large and only working gaits are required. Training Level requires obedience to the aids of the rider without fight or evasion when ridden on light contact.

**First Level:** Emphasis is on freedom, relaxation and rhythm. The First Level determines that the correct foundation is being laid for successful training of the riding horse. The horse moves freely forward in a relaxed manner and with rhythm, its spine always parallel to the track of the prescribed movement and it accepts the bit and obeys simple aids of the rider.

# Dressage Terminology

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- Dressage Test:** A published pattern. A predetermined order of specific movements to be performed by a individual in an allotted time. Movements are required to occur at specific locations in the arena.
- Arena:** Designated area where a dressage test is performed.
- Combined Test:** Consists of two phases, a dressage test and stadium jumping.
- Above the Bit:** A resistance or evasion by the horse accomplished by raising his head to escape the action of the bit.
- Aids:** Natural aids are the hands, legs, weight and voice. Artificial aids are whips and spurs.
- Behind the bit:** An evasion by the horse to avoid the action of the bit by tucking his head behind the vertical.
- Rhythm:** The regularity of footfall at any pace.

## Procedural Notes

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All tests must be carried out from memory if it is part of the **Combined Test** and all movements must follow in the order laid down in the test. A competitor failing to enter the arena within 45 seconds of the starting signal will be eliminated. A horse leaving the arena completely, with all four feet, between the time of entry and final salute, will be eliminated. If a **Dressage Division** competitor elects to have their test read to them they must furnish their own reader. Only the designated reader is allowed to provide any verbal instruction to the rider. Any unauthorized assistance including but not limited to verbal directions, whistles and hand gestures is not permitted

The arena must be 60 meters long and 20 meters wide (standard Arena) or 40 meters long and 20 meters wide (Small Arena), depending on the specifications for the test to

be used. The measurements are for the interior of the enclosure. The arena should be separated from the public by a distance not less than 15 meters. The enclosure itself should consist of a low fence about 30 cm (12 inches) high when possible. The part of the fence at A should be easy to remove, to allow access or may be left open. The fence should be such to prevent the horse's hooves from becoming entangled in the fence. The letters should be placed outside the enclosure, about 50 cm (20 inches) from the fence. It is desirable to place a special marker on the fence itself, level with and in addition to the letter concerned. If there is only one judge he is placed 5 meters (16 feet) from the end of the arena opposite (at) the letter C.

## Scoring the Dressage Test

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**Each movement is scored using the scale below:**

10 excellent	6 satisfactory	2 bad
9 very good	5 sufficient	1 very bad
8 good	4 insufficient	0 not executed
7 fairly good	3 fairly bad	

### **Errors of the Course- Penalty points**

First time - 2 points

Second time - 4 points

Third time - elimination

In the case of marked lameness, the judge will inform the competitor that he/she is eliminated. There is no appeal against a judge's decision.

## Attire and Tack

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**Attire** - Neatness is required. Hunter attire of conservative and dark solid colors are acceptable. Riders must wear proper footwear. Riders must wear approved protective headgear. Hairnets should be worn by riders with long hair. Stock ties may be worn. In extreme heat, coats may be excused at the discretion of the management. Competitors must wear a solid long or short sleeved shirt.

**Tack and Equipment** - For the Dressage test, an English type saddle with stirrups is required. A plain or smooth snaffle bit and a regular leather cavesson, dropped

noseband or a figure 8 noseband is required. Twisted or wire bits are prohibited. Snaffles listed in the Appendix are acceptable. Martingales, side reins and running reins of any kind are forbidden. Spurs are optional. Boots, bandages, or blinders are forbidden. A steward may be present to check equipment prior to the horse entering the arena. One whip, no longer than 120 cm (47.2 in) including lash, may be carried when riding on the flat at any time. One whip no longer than 120 cm (47.2 in) may be carried during the Dressage Test. If a whip is carried in the Jumping Test, or while jumping any obstacle before these tests, it must not be weighted at the end or exceed 75cm (30") in length. An adjustable-length whip may not be carried by a mounted rider.

In the jumping portion of the Combined Test, the type of saddlery is optional. Only unrestricted running martingales or Irish martingales are allowed. Gag bits and hackamores are allowed as well as any bit acceptable for the Hunter Division. In the interest of safety, the stirrup iron and stirrup leathers must hang free from the bar of the saddle and outside the flap. Protective Headgear (see requirements in the *NC 4-H Rules and Regulations Manual*) must be worn by the rider as well as boots. Crops, bats and spurs are acceptable.

## **Stadium Jumping as Part of a Combined Test**

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The test is designed to prove the suppleness, obedience and jumping ability of the horse. At the same time, it demonstrates the competitor's knowledge of pace and the use of his horse in the jumping arena. It is not a test of style or endurance.

Competitors must enter the arena when their number is called or during the allotted time period for their specific test. Each competitor must enter and leave the arena mounted, except with the permission of the show committee, or in case accident under penalty of elimination. Competitors are forbidden to jump or attempt to jump an obstacle in the arena before starting the course. Competitors are also forbidden to show the horse an obstacle on the course or risk being eliminated. Once the bell or whistle has been sounded, the competitor has 45 seconds to cross the starting line. A false start or failing to start within the prescribed time limit results in elimination. Crossing the starting line in the wrong direction prior to starting the course is not penalized as long as the competitor crosses the start line in the proper direction within the prescribed time limit. Unless otherwise posted, crossing the start/finish line during the course is not penalized. Unauthorized assistance or failing to stop at the signal will also result in

elimination.

## Stadium Jumping Arena

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The dimensions of the nature of the arena will be different for each event, however, minimum dimensions of 50 meters by 80 meters or an equivalent is recommended. The arena must be defined and preferably enclosed. The track of the course will be winding with changes of direction, so as to constitute a test of handiness. Red or white boundary flags shall be used to mark the start and finish lines, and to define the obstacles. Each obstacle shall be numbered. Combinations shall in addition be lettered (A, B, etc.). The rider's right should be on the same side as the red flag and the rider's left on the side of the white flag. The starting line may not be more than 25 meters nor less than 6 meters from the first obstacle. The finish line may not be more than 25 meters nor less than 15 meters from the last obstacle.

## Stadium Jumping Course

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The course may consist of 8-12 jumping obstacles. In the Beginner Novice Division, the fence heights are 2' – 2'3" with no more than 1 combination. Fences may be trotted or cantered. The Novice Division fence height will be 2'-3" to 2'-6" with **no more than one** combination. The Training Level Division fence height will be 2'-9" to 3'-0" with at least one combination **when possible** and may have one spread. All fences will have a true ground line or a solid base (i.e. a wall or brush box).

The course will be posted prior to the first jumping session and will at that time be open to riders and trainers for inspection. Every effort will be made to allow maximum inspection time for exhibitors. NO HORSES are allowed in the arena prior to actual ride.

## Stadium Jumping Flags

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Each obstacle will be flagged with a red flag so that when the obstacle is jumped the red flag is on the rider's right. The flag may be a flag attached to the wing of the obstacle or a red cone placed in front of the wing.

# Stadium Jumping Numbers

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Numbers may be placed on the left side of the obstacle to be jumped. The number will reflect the order the obstacles must be taken for the successful completion of the course.

# Unauthorized Assistance

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Any assistance including but not limited to verbal directions, whistles and hand gestures is not permitted. Spectators must stand in the area immediately adjacent to the arena. Show staff will monitor the designated area.

# Scoring the Combined Test

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In the combined test, the winner is the horse and rider combination with the fewest accumulated penalty points from the dressage and jumping phases.

## Calculation of Scores:

- a. The good marks from 0-10 awarded by each judge to a competitor for each numbered movement of the dressage test together with the collective marks are added together, deducting any error of course or test.
- b. For each the judge the percentage of maximum possible good marks obtainable is then calculated by dividing the total good marks received (minus any error of course or test) by the maximum possible good marks obtainable and then multiplying by 100 and rounding the result to two decimal digits. This value is shown as the individual mark.
- c. In order to convert percentage into penalty points, the percentage must be subtracted from 100. The result is rounded to a one decimal digit and is the score, in penalty points, for the test. Any jumping penalty points are added to the dressage points.

## Jumping points are accumulated as follows:

Fault	Penalty Points
First refusal	4 points
Second refusal	8 points
Third refusal	elimination
Knocking down an obstacle	4 points per knockdown
Falling of horse and/or rider	elimination
Jumping obstacle out of order	elimination
Error of course not corrected	eliminated
Any assistance	eliminated

The lowest the combined score is the goal.

## Dressage Check in Procedures

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- You will receive a ride schedule at the State 4 -H Horse Show. Familiarize yourself with your ride time(s) and plan your daily schedule accordingly. Times will also be posted at the Show Office.
- Pick up your entry packet at the show office.
- Familiarize yourself with the dressage and stadium jumping arenas as to location, entry gates and exits.
- The stadium jumping course will be opened to walk prior to the first jumping session. NO HORSES ALLOWED.
- You must check in with the Dressage Ring Superintendent at the entry to the appropriate Dressage arena several minutes prior to your scheduled ride time. **Failure to do so will result in the start of a one minute gate call. Failure to meet the gate call will result in elimination.**
- Inform the Show Secretary of any scratches.
- THERE WILL BE NO SCHOOLING IN THE DRESSAGE ARENA(s) OR STADIUM JUMPING ARENA. Any exhibitor caught schooling in these areas may/will be eliminated from the Dressage Division of the show.
- Your dressage test score sheets will be available at the conclusion of the Dressage Show.

# Championship Tie Breakers and Awards

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Tie breakers will be awarded in the following priority when determining the Dressage Champion and Reserve Champion:

- Combination of all test scores.
- Highest percentage score in a dressage test.

The following **Championships** will be offered:

- Dressage Champion & Reserve Champion
- Combined Training Champion & Reserve Champion

Also the following **High Score Awards** will be presented:

- Introductory Level
- Training Level
- First Level

## Entry Information

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Copies of the Dressage Tests will be available from the following links:

### **Combined Training Tests:**

<http://useventing.com/competitions/dressage>

### **Training and First Level dressage division tests:**

<https://www.usef.org/IFrames/breedsdisciplines/discipline/alldressage/2015dressageTests.aspx>

### **Introductory Level tests:**

<http://www.usdf.org/competitions/competitors/tests.asp>

### **Non-Trotting tests:**

<https://nwaha.com/equestrian-school/dressage>

Entering a Combined Test AUTOMATICALLY enters you in the appropriate Dressage Test. You may enter additional, different Dressage Tests at additional cost. You may only compete in two levels that are consecutive.

Example:

Novice & Training Tests BUT NOT Beginner Novice & Training  
NOT Walk/Trot and First Level Dressage

# Appendix

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## Dressage Tack

- Permitted Bits (from USEF's current Dressage Rulebook pages 42-46)
  - <https://www.usef.org/documents/ruleBook/2015/08-DR.pdf>
- Permitted Nosebands (from USEF's current Dressage Rulebook pages 47-48)
  - <https://www.usef.org/documents/ruleBook/2015/08-DR.pdf>

## Dressage Arenas

- Diagram (from USEF's current Dressage rulebook page 65)
  - <https://www.usef.org/documents/ruleBook/2015/08-DR.pdf>