

# IN HAND SHOWING

## A GUIDE FOR ATTIRE...

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As breeding programmes continuously improve, the show ring has become highly competitive. A testimony to this is the increasing numbers of quality animals gracing our show rings at A&P, Breed and Royal Show level.

Naturally it is essential that not only must the animal be superbly conditioned and presented, but that the handler should be impeccably dressed in appropriate and tasteful attire.

In a large class of top quality animals, first impressions are everything therefore catching the judge's eye (for the right reasons) is imperative. It would be very hard for most judges to ignore an immaculately attired combination.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with wearing riding kit whilst showing in hand and personally, I think children under seventeen look far better in riding gear than street wear. For safety purposes, ensure spurs are removed.

### BUILDING THE PICTURE

Invest in quality, well cut, classical attire to ensure your showing outfit lasts. Always dry clean your outfit immediately after a competition as horse saliva, makeup and general dirt will set and is difficult to remove if delayed and may permanently stain.

Ladies should invest in a well fitting bra. No matter what your bust size, a slight minimising bra will ensure a better line to your jacket. If wearing a fitted skirt or trousers ensure you wear full briefs for a seamless line. Wear full pantihose under a skirt and, regardless of size, control hose will ensure everything sits smoothly. Knee length hose may be worn under slacks. Ensure you have spare pairs on hand - nothing looks worse than laddered hose.

### BODY SHAPES

Showing a horse should largely lean toward a picture of traditional style and elegance. Remember the old adage of "Less is More"! Floppy/baggy clothing will make your overall turnout appear sloppy. If you are of a bigger build, bulky clothing will give the illusion of making you look larger. If you are of a slight build and wear baggy clothing, you run the risk of looking like a bag of potatoes. No matter what your size, attire for the show ring should be 'fitted' (as opposed to tight) to be flattering. Dress to your size to ensure the outfit is flattering. A skirt that finishes above the knee will attract attention to chubby knees or thicker legs. A dark, slimline pencil skirt with a kickpleat is a good general choice. Short, boxy jackets are not suited to the larger figure and/or a large bust and will also attract attention to a larger bottom or thighs. Side pockets on slacks or skirts will visually widen your appearance. Choose items without side pockets or have them sewn up. A long, bulky jacket will create the illusion that your upper body is long and your legs are short, creating an unbalanced picture.

Ensure the outfit suits your personality and learn to identify what doesn't. If you feel ridiculous, you will not be confident. Ask someone whose opinion you trust for their opinion. If in doubt about any part of the outfit, choose something else.

Remember that your aim is to look tasteful and elegant. You are showing a horse NOT dressing for a night of clubbing. The show ring is NOT the place for the micro mini, cleavage or midriff!

### MAKE UP, JEWELLERY & ACCESSORIES

Ladies may wear subtle makeup - ensure lipstick is reapplied as necessary. Neat small earrings may be worn, no dangling or multiple earrings. A single strand pearl necklace can finish the outfit off nicely. This is all the visible jewellery that should be worn. Gloves should always be worn to match your outfit as closely as possible. Small frame sunglasses may be worn if required.

If wearing a buttonhole, a tiny bud minus greenery may be pinned to the underside of the lapel. Bear in mind that a white flower is usually worn as a sign of respect in memorial turnout classes.

A little "bling" in the browband is fine, however avoid going overboard with all sorts of baubles on yourself.

### THE OUTFIT

The breed you are showing will dictate what you wear. Wearing a long skirt to show a breed such as the purebred Arabian, which needs to be really run out, would be impractical. So, dress for the occasion. For a general Agricultural show a subtle coloured pantsuit and hat is suitable. For a bigger show, something a little more eye catching and unique may be worn.

Match the browband colour as closely as possible to your attire. For example, if you have a red with navy browband, then a red suit with navy piping or the other way round, works very well.

If the horse has no white on its front legs, a pair of lighter coloured slacks can ensure the horse's legs and movement are highlighted and dark pants for horses with white legs will attain the same result.

A good general choice for either ladies or gents is a classic navy blue suit. Teamed with different accessories, it will lend itself to many different occasions. Navy blue works well with most colours and suits any colour of horse. Ladies may consider buying a skirt as well as slacks which to match their jacket. Suits can be made to measure or bought off the peg. Keep to toning fabrics, as many different colours will detract from your overall appearance. A camisole, or a simple T-shirt worn under a jacket - opposed to a collared shirt - will give you a streamlined appearance. A plain coloured stock with piped edges fixed with a stock pin worn under the jacket also looks smart.



### SHOES

Footwear that is non slip, safe and allows you to run is of primary importance. Strappy, 3 inch heels are completely impractical not to mention dangerous to wear whilst showing, however clumpy joggers will completely destroy your look. Neat, laced shoes are a far better choice. There are lovely flat heeled shoes available, and if you are as pedantic as I am, you can have them re-soled to ensure they are non slip.

### HATS & HAIR

Your hat, if you choose to wear one, is one of the most important accessories and will certainly complement the overall picture. Ensure your hat fits you securely. If using hat elastic, ensure this is not worn under your chin, Mary Poppins style. Sit the elastic (try to match your hair colour as closely as possible) behind your ears. Huge picture hats loaded with major decoration are not suited to showing for obvious reasons - large hats can catch the wind and blow off, possibly upsetting the your horse and others in the line-up. Choose a style to suit your face shape with colours to blend in with your attire. Unless you have very short hair, cleanly pull your hair into a neat pony tail or a flat bun. Avoid bits of fringe or hair hanging about your face and ensure your hat sits squarely, not perched on the back of your head.

### CANE & WHIP

A cane or whip should be carried for an in hand class. A plain bamboo cane, plaited leather or leather covered cane all work well. Ensure the cane or whip is

suited to the class. A hunt whip will not suit a Miniature Horse - likewise a slimline crystal mounted cane will not suit a hunter.

### ATTIRE FOR GENTLEMAN

Men look fantastic dressed in a suit for formal occasions. Adding a bowler hat looks great to show Riding Ponies. However a navy jacket with collar and tie, teamed with cream trousers or moleskins and a panama hat is suitable for larger shows. Cream pants, a tweed jacket, collar and tie and flat cap suits English native breeds well, and for informal occasions smart trousers and belt, a tailored shirt, tie and hat is appropriate. A trilby hat is a versatile, smart choice and will suit most outfits. Ensure that your jacket is not too long, and look for a tie that blends with the overall colour scheme to add interest. Learn the art of tying a double Windsor knot. When not wearing a jacket, make sure the tie is tucked into your trousers as a flapping tie may upset a young horse. A handkerchief to match the complimentary colour of the tie tucked into the suit pocket is a nice touch. Well polished brogues, boat shoes or riding boots are always appropriate.

N.B. Gentleman should **ALWAYS** remove their hat when addressing or being addressed by a female judge.