



SHOW HUNTER INFORMATION BOOKLET

Compiled by ESNZ Showhunter



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This booklet has been designed for people wishing to find out more about Show Hunter at grassroots level. We are sure it will be useful to those who already have Show Hunter knowledge. Whilst this is not a rule book, it is intended to be an easy interpretation of the Show Hunter discipline. It is always daunting to try something new and not knowing where to start. Sometimes when you arrive at your first show, it is difficult to source the information, so hopefully this book will help you enjoy Show Hunter.

Contacts for your local Show Hunter group

You can find most of the information you need for competing in Show Hunter in New Zealand on the ESNZ website at www.nzequestrian.org.nz

There are contacts for the National Executive including the North and South Island Co-ordinators, judges, judges' advisors, rules and other useful information available.

You will also find web sites for local groups on their individual web sites.

Please note: while every care has been taken to ensure that the details in this booklet are correct, sometimes mistakes happen and rules, conditions and regulations change. So if you have any queries regarding anything in this booklet, or would like confirmation on anything, please don't hesitate to contact any of the Show Hunter officials on the website.

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Where did Show Hunter Come From?

Show Hunter originated in the United States of America where folks who hunted were looking for a competitive environment for their horses in the off-season.

A good Field Hunter has to be a clean jumper with good technique in order to clear the types of obstacles that are encountered on the hunt field – for example wire fences and gorse hedges. A field hunter also has to be obedient, have a steady rhythmical way of going that covers the ground.

These traits are transferred to the Show Hunter arena where the competition thrives in Canada, the USA and New Zealand.

The main reasons for promoting Show Hunter in New Zealand

- To develop better schooled, smoother, safer jumping; more balanced confident horses.
- To provide competitive opportunity for less aggressive and/or green riders and/or horses.
- To develop smoother riding, more balanced, sympathetic, analytical riders and trainers.
- To give experienced riders the opportunity to compete and to improve their riding skills.

Welcome to Show Hunter Competition

What is Show Hunter?

The characteristics of a show hunter, its horses and courses and way of riding are very specific indeed. The Show Hunter can be of any type of breed of horse that has the quality of movement and jumping ability to be competitive.

A Show Hunter is judged on his jumping style, way of going, manners and ability to maintain an even pace over a course of at least eight fences. These are naturally styled with easy take off type fences with simple verticals and oxers and are of appearance such as pickets, natural rails, brushes and small walls.

Courses are designed to favour smoothness, accuracy and a flowing performance. Riders do not walk the courses because they know what the distances will be from the course plan and there will be no surprises. The requirements of Show Hunter include not only smooth riding, but as close to total control as possible. The horse should have a certain pace and rhythm to keep it jumping out of his stride and arriving at a perfect "spot" for each fence, neither too short nor too long. He should show excellent jumping form folding his fore legs well, using his body, head and neck in an even jumping arc. He should bend correctly with good manners; without pulling, throwing his head or resisting. He should do all this while appearing easy to ride, and the aids should be invisible. Any lengthening or shortening of stride should be so smooth that it is invisible to the eye.

A helpful guide to help you enjoy your day

The jumps are not numbered; instead, there is a course plan at the gate with the course clearly marked and the number of strides or distances between the fences indicated.

There is no starting bell and time is not a competitive factor.

A winning show hunter round looks balanced, rhythmical, athletic and relaxed.

A winning horse jumps out of its stride with a well-rounded bascule (outline) over each fence.

You and your horse are judged from the moment you enter the ring. The quality of your horse is mentally noted. The way in which the horse moves is assessed – the more athletic, yet relaxed, the better. What type of tack is noted – refer to "equipment allowed".

Because there is no starting bell you do not salute. Ensure the judge is looking before you start. To commence competition, enter the ring at a walk, pick up a canter, through the trot is good as it shows off all of the horse's paces, form a courtesy opening circle if desired, then jump the first fence. After the last fence come back to a walk before leaving the ring. Come back up to a trot if you are a long way away from the gate to prevent unnecessary delays.

Show Hunter is an integral part of riding and development of skills. Many fine young riders for New Zealand have started their riding careers in the Show Hunter ring. The environment of Show Hunter provides a safe place for young riders and adults alike to learn, practice and perfect all skills required for jumping disciplines.

Many of our top riders and coaches are avid supporters of Show Hunter and encourage young riders to learn how to jump courses correctly.

"Show Hunter is an excellent training ground for the young rider today. It teaches them about pace, striding and distance, skills that they need to learn to jump more technical jumping courses."

Two-time Olympian, John Cottle

All riders must jump with a hard hat secured with an approved harness. Note that ESNZ has introduced specific safety approved coding for helmets and this will be enforced from the beginning of the 2017 season. Please check the ESNZ web site for specifics of these regulations.

Types of classes

Introductory Classes

These classes are open to any pony or horse. There may be some restrictions at some shows – for example age of rider or level of competition. The introductory classes are intended to be a schooling division and are a great way of starting out in Show Hunter. The horse does not have to be registered with Equestrian Sports New Zealand (ESNZ) but must pay additional fees to the organising committee of the show – these change from year to year so please find the latest requirements on the ESNZ website.

Recognised classes – horses (HOYQ)

To enter these classes you must be a member of ESNZ and your horse must be registered with ESNZ.

Please see the ESNZ website for the requirements of entering these classes.

Low Hunter

Fence range 70cm – 80cm maximum. Open to all horses regardless of previous experience. Combinations entering in the Low Hunter classes at that show may not compete in classes higher than 80cm. A rider or horse may compete in other classes/divisions at the show, however, not as a combination.

Junior

Fence maximum 1.00m. Open to all horses regardless of previous experience. Ridden by riders until the end of the show season calendar year that they reach the age of 21 years. Ponies are not eligible. A horse competing in Junior classes may also enter any other HOYQ class.

Amateur

Fence maximum 1.00m. Open to all horses regardless of previous experience, ridden by riders from the first day of the season during which they turn 22 years of age or older and who meet the criteria of Amateur rule in the ESNZ Show Hunter rules.

HOYQ (Horse of the Year Qualifying Classes – previously known as “Open”)

Fences maximum 1.20m. Open to all horses regardless of experience and/or eligibility of rider. Horses in these classes may compete in Junior or Amateur if rider eligibility is met.

Recognised classes – ponies

There are three (3) categories available for ponies:

Category A Pony

Ponies 133 cm and under, 3.05 m (10') stride, Fence height max 70cm

Category B Pony

Ponies over 133 cm up to and including 143 cm, 3.20 m (10'6") stride, Fence height max 80cm

Category C Pony

Ponies over 143 cm up to and including 148 cm, 3.35 m (11') stride, Fence height max 1.00m

Ponies may compete in other categories but **NOT** for High Points classes where they must jump in their own category.

For example, a young or inexperienced Category B pony may be better starting competition in a couple of Category A classes and similarly, an inexperienced child on a Category C pony may not be confident enough to jump the Category C height and may be better doing some lower classes. Note however, that the show schedule may stipulate that ponies must jump in their own category.

HOYQ (Horse of the Year Qualifying Classes – previously known as “Open”)

Open to all ponies regardless of experience. Fence maximum 1.00m. Classes will be run at various fence heights.

Ponies must have a current height certificate to compete.

Note: In recognised classes ponies may not enter any horse class.

Equitation Classes

These classes are judged on the rider's style and ability and not the horse's jumping ability. The round must still be as smooth and as seamless as possible. Courses are usually more technical and test the rider's aptitude for adjustment and schooling and self-discipline. These classes are also recognised but do not accrue points for either NZ High Points or HOY qualifying. This class is judged solely on you, the rider, and your ability to accurately follow course plans and the course designer's instructions. Classes are usually grouped in ages.

Equitation over fences – jumped over a shortened Show Hunter course that requires greater technical ability. Riders may be asked to perform a variety of tests – for example jump a fence from a trot or drop their stirrups and jump a fence.

Equitation under saddle (on the flat) – riders will be asked to perform a variety of movements on the flat – for example sitting trot or lengthening of stride.

Show Hunter Medal Equitation classes – these are a two-part competition. Firstly all competitors perform over fences. Secondly the top ten riders are called back to perform a test on the flat (under saddle). JNZ Development Medal Classes are Equitation classes run in the jumping ring (previously known as show jumping) and are used as a transition between the two disciplines. See the Show Hunter rules for more detail.

Handy Hunter Classes

The handy hunter is a horse that is easy to manoeuvre round the course with a little bit more adaptability than a regular show hunter round. The judge will want to see a horse that can handle tighter turns easily and take some options while being responsive. It is still a hunter class judged on style, pace and quality of the jump.

Judges places emphasis on promptness, tight turns and adaptability while not sacrificing performance and style. Horses that show adaptability for additional elements should be rewarded, if it is done well e.g. cantering straight to the first fence without circling, easily

coming down to walk at the end of the round without circling, riding an inside turn, riding transition to trot closer to trot fence rather than further away.

A handy hunter is required to show 'handiness', which is defined as – time and ground saving movement incorporating promptness, tighter corners, roll back turns, jumping fences on angles or using clever approaches without adversely affecting performance or style but showing adaptability and rideability.

Back to Back Classes

Back to back classes are two separate classes that are run at the same time over the same fences at the same fence height. There is usually a different course for each class and the competitor completes their first round then picks up the canter and starts their second course. Judging starts as soon as the competitor enters the ring and ends when the competitor leaves the ring. There is no start bell and no saluting is required or desired. There will be either one or two judges and they will be sitting on the long side of the arena. Each competitor is allowed an optional starting and finishing "courtesy" circle without penalty – one before the first fence to establish pace and one after the last fence to quietly wind down to a walk and leave the ring as promptly as possible.

Competitors may choose not to ride both classes consecutively and may leave the ring after their first round and come back later for their second round.

Under Saddle Classes

The under saddle (flat) class is held as a complement to the over fences classes in a show hunter division. Note that no martingales are allowed in flat classes.

All horses are judged collectively and perform together as follows:

Walk - trot - walk - canter - walk - reverse (change the rein), then – trot – walk – canter – walk – line up

The ideal horse will most importantly be sound. It will be alert, obedient and responsive. There should be light contact with the horse's mouth, and the horse will carry itself in a long, low frame. The horse will move freely with long athletic steps and should go kindly in the bridle.

The horse should not be over-flexed with its head behind the vertical, nor strung out with no frame or contact at all. Horses/ponies will be judged on their overall performance; their willingness to go forward in a definite cadence at all gaits, being correctly bent, the smoothness of transitions and the general presentation its rider has made of it during the class.

All riders must jump with a hard hat secured with an approved harness

Criteria for Show Hunter – over fences

The horse/pony should jump out of an even stride, arriving at each fence on an even, smooth, flowing stride without a noticeable adjustment from the rider or any quick, choppy strides or long plunging strides before take-off. All strides between fences on lines should be of equal length. A

good round should look like it was a quiet, relaxed pleasure for both horse and rider, with no signs of tenseness or insecurity.

Take-off spot – it is primarily the job of the rider to guide his horse to the most ideal take-off spot by judging and subtly adjusting his pace and length of stride. Theoretically, the ideal take-off and landing spots are as far away from the base of the fence as the fence is high making a symmetrical arc or parabola.

Horses' knees should be tidy, even and above the horizontal from elbow to knee (not so important that the lower legs from the knees to the hoof to be folded tight to the forearm, but should be clearing the fence generously).

Bascule – the horse's top-line should be a proper bascule, head down, neck rounded into loose (not stiff) shoulders, back following arc of jump (straight across fence, not diving to either side) with the hindquarters tipping up generously to follow the same arc, hind legs trailing neatly behind without twisting to either side or jerking up towards the belly.

Landing – should be smooth, without head throwing, reefing, bucking or scooting off and the horse should stay in rhythm throughout the entire course.



Scoring

The judge has a score sheet and every fence that is jumped is marked by a symbol and at the completion of the round, the horse/pony is given a score out of 100. Riders are generally allowed to see these sheets at the completion of the class and they will be available, at the discretion of the show organisers, at the secretary's office. Discussion with the judge MUST be left until the completion of the day.

A total of three (3) refusals anywhere on the course results in elimination – for example, a refusal at fence one followed by a refusal at fence three and one at fence four is automatically an elimination. Time is never a factor in determining a winner. Trotting, once the round has started is heavily penalised with an automatic score of 65 or below in recognised classes. Ties or equal placings are not allowed. Judges must decide preference between similar rounds.

Circles or crossing of the path are scored as a disobedience once your round has started. These are not to be confused with opening and closing circles.

- Excellent and accurate performance – 90s
- Very good performance (only very minor errors) – high 80s
- Very good performance (with several minor errors in mechanics) – low 80s
- Minor chipping in front of the fence, average performance – 70s
- Wrong lead, no change before the next fence on course – will be scored at the judge's discretion
- Serious jumping faults such as hanging front legs, diving, twisting – 60s or below
- Dangerous leap (for example leaving a stride out down a line) – 50s
- Knockdown or refusal – 40s

Remember that trotting a lead change is allowed in Introductory classes.

Off-course is elimination.

Use of equipment “not allowed” will result in no score for the performance – see the section on permitted and not permitted equipment.

In the case of a refusal at the second element of a combination, the rider has the option to re-attempt only the second element or re-jump the entire combination, in which case the first element is scored only the first time it is jumped. Note that a “combination” is defined as a line of fences with either one or two strides between them. In a line of fences with three or more strides, then only the second element is re-attempted.

Courses for Show Hunters

Size of ring

The minimum recommended dimensions for a Show Hunter ring are 40m x 80m (135ft x 270ft), but basically the ring should be twice as long as it is wide.

All jumps should be located in the middle third of the ring, allowing one third on each end for smooth wide turns.

All lines should be set along the sides of the ring or lengthwise along the diagonals, avoiding setting any fences at all on the short ends of the ring so as not to surprise the horses or cause abrupt turns interrupting the consistent rhythm desired. Horse courses are designed on a 3.65m (12') stride.

Equipment

Obstacles should be natural, unpainted or solid colour, which means striped rails or planks should be avoided, unless sufficient natural material is unavailable.

- Standards or stands should be 30” wide and located on both sides of the front element utilising moveable cups.
- Rails – plain and natural in colour, using the same colour in one jump is preferable.
- Flower boxes of greenery or large flowers
- Brush boxes filled with Manuka or greenery – artificial brush can be used.
- Hen coops and walls – painted plain colours or brick or stone wall in type, brown, white, grey, green etc
- Gates – white, green or brown
- Flaxes – potted, under or in front of poles

- Greenery – tied to stands or laid down on the ground in front of poles
- Astro-turf – used on walls or half round shaped

Construction of fences

Fences should be well filled and solid looking. All fences must have ground lines. The highest element of any fence, including the top front rail of oxers must be faultable. Use rails in cups or walls with blocks. Fences are not flagged or numbered. Back rails must have at least one break-away cup.

Vertical fences

These can be any upright (not planks unless they are beneath a top rail) and may be jumped from both directions.

Oxer fences

May only be ascending with the back rail about 10-15cm (3-6”) higher than the front rail.

The front rail can be any type of vertical (not a plank). Back rail must be only a single horizontal rail, not a plank or gate. At least one side of the back rail should be supported by a break-away jump cup.

Width must be commensurate to height (ie. No wider than the height). An oxer can only be jumped from one direction.

An oxer is more conducive to a horse using his knees well. As a rule, the horse jumps into a line over a vertical and out over an oxer.

Triple bars, Swedish oxers, fan jumps, planks, hogs-backs and treble combinations of three fences related by one or two strides are not allowed on a Show Hunter courses.

Reading a course plan

The course should consist of eight to ten fences, with at least one, preferably two changes of direction. A course plan should be set up on a board at the in-gate of each ring. A single line is used for a vertical fence and a double line is indicated for an oxer. Jumps are usually numbered on the right hand side of the fences on the course map. Some course maps have two course plans on them and are often indicated in a different colour with correlating class numbers at the top. Verticals can sometimes be used to jump both ways depending on the course. When there are numbers written inside each of the lines of the course this tells you how many strides are required in each line. This depends on what category you and your pony are entered in. Horses jump on a 3.64m stride. Remember not to over jump your mount in one day. You do not need to enter in every single class. If you are not too sure what to enter always ask, our Show Hunter officials are always happy to help you out!

Design of a course

- One or two double combinations, never a triple combination
- All turns should be wide angle or U turns, never acute
- Lines should consist of one, two or three fences set on the longer sides of the ring or across the diagonal
- Lines can be straight or gently bending, never so severe as to interrupt the natural rhythm of the stride. Bending lines should be saved for special classes or for use in larger rings.

Tips

You will note that the lines of fences are placed apart. This is so that you have plenty of room to ride wide, deep corners. Use the corners to balance and settle your horse and maintain rhythm. You give your horse every advantage to jump well if you do so. Encourage your horse to do a flying change by always riding in straight lines.

Dress Code

If a show is designated “introductory” or “training” day, then generally casual dress is acceptable. **An approved safety hat must be worn at all times.**

Remember that the horse is turned out in plain simple tack, don't spoil it with the introduction of bright colours that will distract from the look of both horse and rider. Plaiting is not required for unrecognised classes, however is recommended for recognised classes. Fitted saddle cloths and well-fitting tack always turns a horse out to his best.



Registration of a Show Hunter

As registration fees and requirements change from time-to-time, it is important that you check current requirements for the season you wish to compete in. This is available on the ESNZ website.

You can find out when shows are being held and how to enter by:

- ESNZ and other equestrian web sites
- By contacting your local Show Hunter/Jumping group
- Local Show Hunter/Jumping Group web sites

Helpers

Volunteers are always needed before, during and at the end of the show. You can assist your local group by becoming involved. Help is always needed to build courses, to pick up poles, assist with changing fence heights and distances, gate keeping, packing gear away and the end of the day, bringing a plate of food for judges and helpers. Your assistance is always very appreciated as often the task of organising a show is left to a small, overworked committee who give their time so very generously so that others may enjoy the day.

Competitors are required to treat all judges, in-gate people and show officials at all events from introductory/training days to HOY shows in a courteous manner at all times. Remember, they are giving up their time to run a horse show for you!

Use of equipment in Show Hunter

Show Hunter encourages the use of natural aids and correct schooling so we are looking for a horse or pony with the least amount of equipment that it requires. There are no points deducted for the use of allowed gear, but this can be used as a tie-breaker. A judge is looking for the schooling and training of the horse and if a horse comes into the ring with a lot of gear, a judge is instantly made aware that it could have a schooling problem. Remember the general rule of "less is best".

Allowed

- A correctly fitted cavesson noseband
- Spurs; including spurs with a smooth moving ball
- Short crop
- Leg boots and/or bandages
- Standing or running martingale
- Breastplate
- Any form of snaffle bit where the primary action is on the horse's mouth, including corners of the mouth, including corners of the mouth, bars and tongue
- Pelhams and Kimblewicks if used in their entirety, where the primary action is on the horse's jaw. Pelhams must be used with either two separate reins or joiners. A slotted Kimblewick may only be used where the reins are not fixed in the rein slots
- Double bridle
- Stud guards

Not allowed (use of "not allowed" equipment will result in a no-score for the performance – i.e. elimination)

- Drop or any kind of noseband below the bit
- Unconventional bits where the primary action of the bit is on the poll, including a leverage action causing downwards poll pressure – for example Butterfly bit, puzzle bit, gags, peassoas or Dutch gags, Filcher snaffles, hanging bits or fixed rein bits
- Bitless bridle
- Hackamore and elevator bits
- Unconventional bit used as an artificial turning aid
- German Martingales, Market Harboroughs
- Chambon or other training equipment and draw reins
- Rowel spurs (any spur with a moving part unless it is a spherical ball)
- Dressage whip

- Shadow roll, stone guard, fly screen or nets
- Ear muffs
- Bit guards
- Bell Boots, hoof bands and Fetlock Rings (unless the judge chooses to make an exception due to extremely muddy and/or deep footing) or a veterinary injury requires protection
 - **The The judge must be informed of the injury before the class or the result will be a “no score”**
- The Judge’s Advisor Committee has the right to assess the use of any bit as allowed or not allowed. Their decision will be final.

As the allowed and not-allowed gear is updated in the rules from time to time, please refer to the most up-to-date copy of the rules on the ESNZ website.

Horse of the Year Qualifications (Show Hunter Division)

To compete at Horse of the Year, your horse/pony is required to have gained at least 20 points in the current season before the commencement of the Show to start in any class at the Horse of the Year Show. The season starts 1st August but points gained after Horse of the Year will be carried forward to the next season.

Refer to the ESNZ Show Hunter Rule Book for a full set of rules regarding Horse of the Year competitions and eligibility. It is on the ESNZ Web Site.











New Zealand Show Hunter High Points

Awards will be presented to the highest pointed Show Hunter Open Horse, Junior Horse, Amateur Horse and Category A, B and C Ponies in New Zealand (both islands combined). There are also Seriec classes for Equitation (Pony, Adult and Junior).

All NZ High Point classes will be nominated by the Show Organising Committee. The ESNZ Jumping/Show Hunter calendar which is available prior to each season will advertise all NZ High Point dates.

Please refer to the Show Hunter Rule Book for a full set of rules regarding the NZ High Points competitions and Equitation Series Conditions..

Commonly Used Judging Symbols

	Good take-off spot and fence, symmetrical arc
	Close take-off spot but ok jump
	Very close take-off spot, awkward jump
	Long take-off spot
	Dwelling in air, nearly landing on all fours
	Hollow or inverted, didn't use neck at all
	Flat
	Hesitated on take off, stuck off ground
	Uneven, one knee higher than other
	



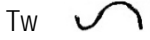
Hangs legs



Knees below horizontal, rolled over front end



Insecure stride in mid air, very dangerous



Twisted hind legs to one side



Tilted front end to one side



Change of pace or rhythm, sped up, slowed down



Jumped to the left or right, not straight



Weaving between fences



Front rub, hind rub

KD

Knockdown

R

Refusal

+ 1, - 1

Added stride, left out stride

WL

Wrong lead around turn

X

Cross cantered, never completed lead change

Tr

Trotted on course

Sw

Switched leads

CC

Cut corner

HH

Head high

Tns

Tense

GM, FM, PM

Good mover, fair mover, poor mover

GJ, FJ, PJ

Good jumper, fair jumper, poor jumper