



Directives for International Dressage Competitions for 5, 6 and 7-year old horses

The FEI Rules for Dressage Events apply to all international Young Horse Dressage events, except where stated differently below.

The basic idea of the young horse competitions is to introduce 5, 6 and 7-year-old horses to dressage competitions to help them gain experience in the dressage arena and to give them the opportunity to compete against each other in the same level of test.

A primary concern is to evaluate the correct training of young dressage horses, to encourage the development of national breeds and the interest in international competitions involving young horses.

Dressage Tests:

5-year olds: FEI Preliminary Test for 5-year old horses
FEI Dressage Test for 5-year old horses, Final

6-year olds: FEI Preliminary Test for 6-year old horses
FEI Dressage Test for 6-year old horses, Final

7-year olds: FEI Preliminary test for 7-year old horses
FEI Dressage test for 7-years old horses, Final

4-year olds: FEI Dressage Test for 4-year old horses to be used only at National events.

Dress:

Refer to Article 427 of the Dressage Rules. Additionally, a short dark jacket (HSV colors) is allowed. Protective headgear has to be worn at all times.

Saddlery:

The tests for 5- and 6-year old horses are required to be ridden in a snaffle. The test for 7-year old horses can be ridden in a snaffle or a double bridle. Bits and nosebands are according to article 428 of these rules. The Mexican/Crossed noseband is not permitted. Bandages and whips are not allowed during the test.

1. Principles of Judging Young Horse Classes

While judging young horse classes three aspects are most important:

- The paces
- The standard of training
- The general impression including the conformation, the temperament and the natural talent to become a high-class dressage horse

The basic paces, handiness, and general impression of the horse as a dressage horse will be judged. Judges should ask:

- whether or not the performance of the horse corresponds to the general idea of a dressage horse
- whether the horse is on the correct training path
- whether the horse has the ability to perform Dressage at a high level

Paces

The paces have to be judged uncompromisingly as they are vitally important for the quality of a dressage horse. They must be of absolute regularity without tension. The impulsion of the paces should be developed from the hindquarters through a swinging back with active hind legs. The steps and strides must be elastic with the horse showing a natural self-carriage and freedom of the shoulder.

The quality of the paces is judged by assessing the overall impression, the regularity and elasticity of the steps and by the ability to maintain the same rhythm and natural balance, even after a transition within the paces or from one pace to another.

Detailed descriptions of the paces can be found in these rules art. 403 – 405 or in the FEI Handbook under "Description of movements" (walk, trot, and canter).

Standard of Training

Equally important as the paces is the correct training according to the age of the horse. The judges should assess whether or not the horse's training corresponds to the principles of the training scale. Special emphasis has to be made regarding a soft and steady contact with a gently chewing mouth and an elastic poll. The poll should be the highest point and the neck should be without any restriction. Lateral flexion and bend must be equally developed to both sides. The horse must be supple and obedient.

Natural ability to self-carry is asked for but is relative to the age of the horse. In classes for 5-year-old horses only the beginning of collection, the "willingness to collect" is required. For the 6-year-old horses, a more clearly defined collection, the "ability to collect" is necessary. The 7 year old horses need to show collection inherent to this level, ability to carry weight and lightness of forehand. A 7 year old horse needs to be through the back and in self carriage with a steady contact showing a good balance and correct bends.

The most important criteria for lateral movements and flying changes in Young Horse Tests are the fluency and the correct execution (see minor mistakes).

When judging the tests for 5-, 6- and 7-year-old-horses the judges have to differentiate between minor mistakes, which are not a significant factor in the score, and fundamental mistakes, which generally lead to lower marks.

Minor mistakes

Minor mistakes should be judged leniently, if, in principle, the horse is demonstrating correct training with well-developed paces.

Horses which at the beginning of the test show tension and some concentration lapses or which may even be a bit spooky, should be judged more benevolently than in other international Dressage competitions.

Minor mistakes for 5-year-old horses

- Moments of tension at the beginning of the test with slight concentration lapses but improving throughout the test
- Halt not completely attentive or straight
- Transitions not exactly at the markers
- Slight and momentary crookedness
- Canter wrong lead, but immediately corrected
- Short break of pace e.g. falling into trot during canter work but immediately corrected

- Simple change of leg with 2 or 6 steps of walk in between instead of 3-5 steps

Minor mistakes for 6-year-old horses

- Starting/ending the lateral movement not exactly at the required marker, slightly losing the bend for a short moment
- Losing the bend at the end of the lateral movement
- Flying change not exactly at the required marker, slightly swaying, not totally balanced

Minor mistakes for 7-year-old horses

- Slightly swaying, not totally balanced in series of changes, must be straight in single change
- Momentary loss of balance in canter pirouettes

Fundamental mistakes

Fundamental mistakes will generally lead to lower marks being awarded. Examples of such errors are: obviously uneven rhythm, tension, lasting contact failure, insufficiently swinging back, serious crookedness and insufficient engagement of the hind legs.

Fundamental mistakes for 5-year-old horses

- Uneven rhythm in trot movements
- Lack of clear three-beat in canter including counter canter
- Uneven or pacing steps in walk including the turn on the haunches
- Clear resistance or loss of diagonal steps in the rein back
- Simple changes of leg without any walk steps shown
- Tension throughout
- Repeated contact, tilting/mouth problems
- Lack of suppleness in the back
- Obvious crookedness
- Stiff hind legs, lacking energy and engagement

Fundamental mistakes for 6-year-old horses

- Uneven rhythm in trot movements
- Lack of clear three-beat in canter including counter canter
- Uneven or pacing steps in walk including the walk pirouettes
- Lack of clear bend in the lateral movements
- Mostly incorrect flying changes
- Tension throughout
- Repeated contact, tilting/mouth problems
- Lack of suppleness in the back
- Obvious crookedness
- Stiff hind legs, lacking energy and engagement

Fundamental mistakes for 7-year-old horses

- Uneven rhythm in trot movements
- Lack of clear 3-beat in canter including the same, clear tendency in canter pirouettes Uneven or pacing steps in walk
- Lack of clear bend in the lateral movements
- Incorrect flying changes
- Tension throughout
- Repeated contact, tilting and open-mouth problems Lack of suppleness in the back

- Obvious crookedness
- Stiff hind legs, lacking energy and engagement Repeated resistance (inability) in collected work

General Impression

Besides the paces and the standard of training the judges have to decide whether or not the horse shows enough natural talent to develop into a high-class dressage horse.

The general impression is based on:

- The quality of the paces (including the degree of effortlessness with which the horse is able to perform the movements)
- The standard of training according to the training scale
- The potential and suitability as a dressage horse, including temperament (attentiveness, willingness to work, natural forward-going attitude, mental suppleness) conformation, expression (appearance, charisma, presence, natural charm)

A horse with the potential to become a high level dressage horse always has to be preferred to a horse that only executes the test in an obedient way but without showing any further scope.

The rider

The rider's seat and the influence of his aids are of minor importance when judging Young Horse Classes.

2. The Judging System of Young Horse Classes

In General

Young Horse classes for 5 and 6-year old horses are to be judged by a Ground Jury of at least three FEI judges, (one of whom must be foreign). The judges are positioned at C, working as a team, giving their marks jointly.

The marking sheets with the guidelines have to be used. The judges give 5 marks for trot, walk, and canter, the submissiveness, and the general impression. Decimals are allowed. The marks are added up and multiplied by 2, which gives the total score. All errors have to be deducted according to the FEI Rules.

Young Horse classes for 7-year old horses can be judged by a Ground Jury of three or five FEI Judges. For a Ground Jury of 3, the President sits at C and judges only the technical execution of the test. The second and third judges sit at E or B and judge only the quality of the horse. For a Ground Jury of 5, the President and a second Judge sit at C and a third Ground Jury Member at E, judging only the quality of the horse by using a joint scoring method connected by headsets. The other two Ground Jury Members are individually judging only the technical execution of the test, one sitting at M and the other at B, but neither connected among each other nor connected to the judges at C and E. The quality of the horse and the technical execution of the test shall be weighted each with 50% towards the end result. All errors have to be deducted according to the FEI Rules.

The individual marks should be explained by detailed comments on the test sheets. Comments after each ride are not compulsory, however, they are recommended in order to make the competition more attractive to the public.

FEI Championships

Championships for 5 and 6 year old horses are judged by a Ground Jury of four FEI judges appointed by the FEI. The President of the Ground Jury and the Commentating Judge are placed at C, the third judge at the middle of the long side and the fourth judge either at C or together with the fourth judge also on the middle of the long side. All judges work as a team, giving their marks jointly. A possibility for the judges to communicate with each other has to be arranged (headsets).

Championships for 7 year old horses are judged by a Ground Jury of five FEI judges appointed by the FEI. The President and the Commentating Judge sit at C and a third Ground Jury Member at E, judging only the quality of the horse by using a joint scoring method connected by headsets. The other two Ground Jury Members are individually judging only the technical execution of the test, one sitting at M and the other at B, but neither connected among each other nor connected to the judges at C and E. The quality of the horse and the technical execution of the test shall be weighted each with 50% towards the end result.

One member of the judges' panel will act as a commentator for the public. It is compulsory for the second qualifying test as well as for the final competition that comments on the ride, on the quality of the three basic paces, on the rideability and the training level as well as on the overall impression of the whole performance are given after each test. This kind of verbal information should be given in English and, in addition, in the language of the country in which the event takes place.

CDI-YH

A list of judges who are qualified to officiate as judges for CDI-YH is maintained by the FEI Secretariat.

Timetable:

The timetable of Young Horses classes should allow 1-2 extra minutes between each competitor in order for the horse to become accustomed to the surroundings. This time is also needed for the judges' commentary and scores which are announced immediately after the end of each individual ride.