



dressageTAS

DRESSAGE TASMANIA NEWS

Issue 6 Autumn 2024

Autumn greetings everyone!

Welcome to another Dressage Tasmania newsletter.

Are you ready for Autumn; cooler change, longer coats, shorter days? Personally, I'm looking forward to a few icy mornings (although, ask me when they come!)

If you would like to communicate with the Dressage Tasmania Committee, please email: dressagetasmania@outlook.com.

Decision-making is achieved through meetings which usually occur monthly. Your Zone committee is your first contact point (refer contact details below).

Zone contacts

North

Co-Chairs – Judy Atkinson and Sue Lamont

Secretary – Megan Whalley

Minute Secretary – Alana Fazackerley

Treasurer – Jayne Blyth

General committee: Judy Harding, Teresa Darcy, Jess Van der Vlist, Maryann Smink.

Email address: dressagenorth@gmail.com

North West

Chair – Penelope Moore

Vice Chair – Linda Smink

Secretary – Jodi Towns

Treasurer – Annika Lockwood

General committee: Rose Kemp, Paul Kemp, Penny Higgins, Caitlin Radford, Kenya Broad, Alison Hall.

Email address: nwdressagezone@gmail.com

South

Chair – Suanne Lawrence

Vice Chair – Gill von Bertouch

Treasurer – Katherine Drake

Minutes Secretary – Jill Suban

General Committee: Sue McDermott, Sophie McDermott, Tammy Cunningham, Jenny Wilson, Chloe Amos, Jill Schwartz, Heather Stewart.

Email address: dressagetassouth@gmail.com



Dressage Tasmania – State Dressage Authority

President

Judy Atkinson

Treasurer

Alison Hall

Vice President

Sue Lamont

Committee

Penelope Moore,

Secretary

Alana Fazackerley

Heather Stewart, Tania Hay

Seasonal quote:

Respect and self-assurance are the indispensable preconditions for building a harmonious partnership. (Uta Graf, Grand Prix rider)



Self-Care Corner

Pilates Core Strength for Riders

The practice of Pilates for Riders recognises the importance of building a solid foundation of strength and balance to become a better rider, benefiting both the rider and horse.

Control of our bodies, by being able to move our pelvises more effectively, helps us control our horse's movement.

The better balanced and stable the rider becomes, the less interference on the horse's balance and stability.

The team can then work together harmoniously as truly gymnastised athletes.

The foundation to balance and core strength is effective breathing.

It positively affects postural balance, core strength and stability or function.

It follows that we need to learn how to breathe, engaging the diaphragm, as this becomes the basis of core stability.

Diaphragmatic breathing or "belly breathing" engages the diaphragm, intercostal, abdominal and pelvic floor muscles.

This means actively drawing down the diaphragm with each inward breath and filling the lungs more effectively. (Imagine you have a conical flask with a long narrow neck and a big round base in your belly as you breathe in.)

Other benefits to diaphragmatic breathing include helping to lower cortisol levels in stressful situations e.g. competing, lower heart rate and blood pressure.

Annie McCaughey, Accredited Pilates Instructor.

Have you thought about being a Writer?

Writing, or pencilling is essential for competitions, but resources are few and they're sorely needed. It's amazing how much you can learn by listening to a judge comment and score – and it's not hard.

Live scoring through Nominate makes the task easy, using tablets already set up before the competition. It's a case of click and go.

There are always backup hard copy test sheets in case of any hiccups.

If you want to know more, or have a go, ask to sit in on a test or two at a competition to see how it's done or take 10 minutes at lunch time to go through the process with an experienced Writer.

Email your Zone to express an interest – go on, do it!



Do you have ideas about how to increase participation in our sport?

Dressage Tasmania would like more people to enjoy the sport in Tasmania – more people attending development, training, come and try and competitions around the state – and more people knowing about, coming to watch and supporting our riders.

Sometimes dressage is seen as a high performance (Olympic) sport for a select few, but we believe dressage can be enjoyable for everyone.

Our three Zones run events around the state and are administered by generous volunteers who sacrifice their time so that we can all enjoy the sport – **and they want to hear from you**. All members are invited to have input and be involved. No matter how small or large a contribution, your opinions are sorely needed to keep our sport alive. If you have **any** ideas on how we can get the dressage message out; improvements, additional events we could try, what you and your horse would enjoy . . . **please let your Zone know**.

Our sport is for everyone – let's spread the news!



Jono and Pene's Dressage Festival Adventure . . . Penelope Moore

Stable Ground Victorian Dressage Festival, 7 – 10 December 2023, Werribee Park National Equestrian Centre



Penelope Moore and Clearview Rain Dancer



Jonathan Combes and WP Milo

A few years ago, Jamie Smith and I headed to the Victorian Dressage Festival and competed. At the time Jamie forced me into it, I was just filling a gap in his float in my opinion and giving Mocha a travel friend. I ended up having the time of my life and was very keen to go back.

2023 was my year and I booked the boat with plans on taking both Her Royal Ruby and Clearview Rain Dancer. My sister a South Australian was also going to be competing at the event it would be the first time we had competed at the same event since I was about 8 years old!

Unfortunately Her Royal Ruby was not going to be fit enough for that level of competition. This left me in a conundrum. A commitment to my sister had been made, but it seemed like a big trip just to go and compete Preliminary and Novice, after all, I was only really taking Dancer for a friend for Ruby and the experience. By this point I was emotionally committed, but also worried about taking my baby horse alone on the Spirit. I took the same approach that Jamie took with me a few years earlier and encouraged (aka forced) Jonathan Coombe into coming along with me on this adventure. It really didn't take that much convincing.

Jono and Milo had only done one competition together at this point, but with scores good enough to be accepted at the Victorian Dressage Festival, he had no option but to come with me!

The day arrived to board the Spirit. For any Tasmanian horse owner this is a nervous time, following a strict preparation, temp checks each day for a week leading up to the trip, stress paste (they hated it), rock tape in the float to prevent stiffness, ulcer treatment.

The team on the Spirit were excellent. The very good-looking man allowed us to stay with the horses right until the second we had to go upstairs. One last carrot and up we went, where we settled our nerves with the buffet and a fair few beers. We were blessed with an amazing smooth crossing.

The second the morning alarm went off we were out like lighting and were allowed to go down with the truck drivers to be with the horses. Jono and I sobbed the moment we laid eyes on the horses and could see they were 100% fine. We were first off and drove right to Werribee to get the horses off, stretch their legs and give them water and breakfast. Dancer was EXTREMELY happy to be fed and watered and tried to finish both hers and help Milo with his breakfast. But they were happy and healthy, not sure why we were so stressed!

“One last carrot and up we went, where we settled our nerves with the buffet and a fair few beers.”



Penelope Moore and Clearview Rain Dancer

Time to drive in the traffic... at which point I handed the keys to Jono and elected him in charge of that task! Our first competition was at Boneo. The horses had 4 days to recover and prepare. They were both happy enough, we gave them a light ride at about 7pm that night. We continued checking temps daily the whole time away, looking out for any form of travel sickness. We stayed with a friend of my sister the first two days, then headed to Nar Nar Goon to spend a week with the fabulous Vicki Roux who owns a spelling facility for racehorses. With knee high grass in wonderful paddocks the horses thought they were in heaven. Dancer was a slight founder risk as she even ate while laying down.

**“Jono and I both
throwing ourselves
right in the deep end
and having an
Elementary start.”**

We headed off to our first competition at Boneo. Just a casual local comp. Jono and I both throwing ourselves right in the deep end and having an Elementary start. Also happened to be on the main arena in front of the restaurant. Jono was up first and safe to say he was slightly nervous, and needed a bit of a firm talking to pull himself together. Milo was an absolute star and credit to the hard work Jono had done over the winter. He coped with the busy warm up arena like a pro and did a very neat and tidy Elementary for a Fourth overall, not bad for their third test together! This greatly improved Jono’s confidence and the world was now his oyster!

Dancer warmed up like a pro, but was the last horse on and was the only horse left in the area. So there was a fair amount of tension in our test, but still a fair effort for her first swing at it, definitely nothing to write home about!

We both had a Novice next up, out in the boondock arenas at Boneo. Jono first up again, and a super test, slap the rider for an error of course with a transition at the wrong marker, but still a very respectable 67.5% and Third place. Dancer was an absolute twit about heading out to the back arenas and was showing her best rearing horse statue impersonations! I managed to get her in the arena and pulled off a pretty good test, for a 68.9% for Second. I too needed a slap with some inaccurate riding seeing us with an error of course also.



Jonathan Combes and WP Milo

“I was shocked but thrilled to see Judy Atkinson, Dancer’s breeder on the sidelines as I was warming up, along with half of Tasmania.”

the sidelines as I was warming up, along with half of Tasmania. What a support crew!

My biggest worry heading over was how Dancer would be in the warm up arena, with all those extra horses. She was an absolute star and didn't bat an eyelid. Stallions, out of control ponies, nothing bothered her. First test I rode in a little too 'Elementary frame' and while the test felt great, not a Preliminary way of going. 66.7% Thirteenth overall, (Fourth in the Amateur Division).

Back to Vicki's until the following Wednesday.

We had a quick tune-up on the way to Werribee with Jenny Gehrke, who just happened to be doing a clinic in Victoria, then over to Werribee to get settled in for what we came for. Dancer had never been stabled, so I was slightly worried about how she would be. Shouldn't have been, she loved it. We put a stable between them, as by this point they didn't think they could live apart. We started all our rides at different times to get them used to being separated.

My Sister arrived the following day, along with beautiful Bree and our adventure got even better.

Dancer was up first on Friday in the Preliminary. It was HOT and WINDY (great!) I was shocked but thrilled to see Judy Atkinson, Dancer’s breeder on

After a quick look at the video, and a reassessment of my plan, we pulled on our big girl pants, determined to show off the talent of by beautiful horse. We went back out and did a noteworthy test for 73.3% (77% from one judge), Fourth overall from 32 combinations (First in the Amateur Division). Clever pony!

We now had a day off, Novice on the Sunday where both Jono and I competed. The draw had Jono and I competing in opposite rings at pretty much the same time. Not ideal on horses that now didn't think they could live without each other, but such is life and we got on with it. Jono did two very correct tests for a 66.9% and a 65.7%, putting him in Thirteenth overall in the Championship out of 35 combination.

A very solid effort for a team that had only done three other competitions together, and had never competed on the mainland stage before!

My first test was . . . very forward . . . half halts were a distant memory. Dancer was showing her full range of movement. We managed a 69.5% for Eighth overall (Fourth in the Amateur Division). Again, a slight reassessment was required and retesting of the breaks. A lovely second test for a 70.4% Fourth overall (Second in the Amateur Division saw us finish Fourth overall in the Championship (Second in the Amateur Division).

“We went back out and did a noteworthy test for 73.3% (77% from one judge), Fourth overall from 32 combinations (First in the Amateur Division). Clever pony!”



Penelope Moore and Clearview Rain Dancer

It was a wonderful show and a great experience for us and our horses to dip our toes in and know how the horses would be on the adventure. I am super proud of both our horses, and extremely chuffed with my beautiful Tassie bred Clearview Rain Dancer. She's a testament to the years Judy has put into her breeding program, and just a joy to take places. She's like a big Labrador!

I highly encourage anyone to take the leap, get on the boat and head over. I plan to go back this year and it would be incredible to have a boat load of Tassie horses!! Come with me!! You won't regret it!

Pen!

Dressage Tasmania Autumn Calendar

Please consider making contact to help at an event. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

MARCH			
Date	Venue	Event	Contact
2-3	TEC	2024 TasRacing Cavalor State Dressage Championships	Dressagetas.championships@gmail.com
16	TEC	Southern Zone Training Day	dressagetassouth@gmail.com
21-24	Werribee	Dressage With The Stars	amyslayter@equestrianvictoria.com.au
24	Thirlstane	NW Zone Competition	nwdressagezone@gmail.com
APRIL			
7	TEC	Southern Zone Competition Unofficial Series Round 1	dressagetassouth@gmail.com
14	Thirlstane	Northern Zone Competition	dressagenorth@gmail.com
14	TEC	Southern Zone Training Day	dressagetassouth@gmail.com
28	Thirlstane	NW Zone Training Day	nwdressagezone@gmail.com
MAY			
5	TEC	Southern Zone Competition Unofficial Series Round 2	dressagetassouth@gmail.com
18	TEC	Southern Zone Training Day	dressagetassouth@gmail.com
26	Thirlstane	NW Zone Competition	nwdressagezone@gmail.com



Dressage Tasmania events

Access events through *Nominate*. Flag in *Nominate* to receive email notifications of upcoming events. Dressage Tasmania printable calendar:

<https://www.tas.equestrian.org.au/dressage/news/printable-dressage-tasmania-calendar-2022-2023> Access the link and scroll down the page to download a PDF calendar of events.

New Gear Check Rule

Rule 4.4 of the EA National Dressage Rules 1 January 2024 applies to official dressage competitions and has been introduced for the following reasons:

1. To enable a check for blood after a test is completed
2. To ensure that a rider is not interrupted immediately before their test to do a bit check prior to a horse competing (which is not safe or fair)
3. To prevent horses from becoming agitated whilst waiting for a gear check prior to their test, when they are warmed up and ready to go.

Dressage competitors be aware that you will need to ensure that your gear is correct when commencing your test, as incorrect gear could result in elimination after you have finished your test.



Horse and Pony of the Year nominations will open soon after Champs – keep your eye on your emails!

9 Training Tips from German Dressage Olympian Dorothee Schneider

Schneider dressagetoday

1 Make your horse feel proud of his work. “Give your horse positive feedback so he can be motivated to do the next step, feeling proud of himself and like he is doing something well—so he feels happy to do this with us.”

2 Utilize the second track. The second track is to the inside of the path along the rail. Riding on it gives you a feel of how balanced the horse is between both of your reins and both of your legs as the rider. This helps you manage his straightness.

3 Be aware of your horse’s strong and hollow sides and train accordingly. “Every horse has one hollow and one stronger side, and we have to manage this certainty in our own riding and training.” This is natural and inevitable. Riding on the second track also helps you be more aware of this. The strong side is the side on which the horse has more difficulty bending and flexing his own body. On the opposite is the hollow side, where the horse bends and flexes by himself (natural crookedness) to the inside—therefore it’s more difficult to turn the horse because you easily lose control of the outside shoulder.



4. Remember to feel the rhythm. Every horse has a particular rhythm in which it is easiest for them to swing in the gaits and find the contact to both reins. It is your job as the rider to find the best rhythm for your horse, so he is able to use his back. “Feel the rhythm and support it with your pelvis and your hips,” Schneider coached Vincent Flores aboard the gray Danish mare Southern Belle SWF, reminding him to maintain a defined three-beat rhythm in the canter. Often when discussing rhythm, Schneider used the phrase “take a seat,” advising riders to stretch in their bodies, open the knees and sit into their horses. Doing this helped riders communicate the desired rhythm more clearly to their horses.

5. Focus on the hind leg. Throughout the clinic, Schneider emphasized many of the fundamental concepts of correct dressage—not the least of which was riding the horse from active hind legs, over and through the back, reaching to the bit. She included several reminders to focus on the hind legs in different ways. For example, when a horse and rider transitioned from walk into trot, she said that the impulsion of the first step of trot comes from his hind leg. Also, in posting trot, imagine that you take your horse’s inside hind leg with you as you go upward and forward in the rising moment. Later in the horse’s development, controlling his hind legs on the line of travel is one of the important factors of a good quality flying change.

6. Incorporate (outside) shoulder-in. In every session, Schneider instructed riders to utilize shoulder-in. This tool helps to stabilize the horse’s inside hind leg underneath the body and also makes riders drive with their inside legs to the outside contact for better connection. Shoulder-in is about getting the horse to bend throughout his body, not just in his neck. “Riding shoulder-in does not mean riding with too much flexion. It means moving the outside shoulder in front of the inside hind leg,” she explained. During Katie Robicheaux’s Fourth Level demo ride aboard Grandioso, Schneider used shoulder-in to help Robicheaux prepare for half passes by confirming correct bend. “Bend your horse around your inside leg. The best preparation for the half pass is in shoulder-in.”

7. Encourage your horse to reach to the bit with an open neck and throatlatch. Schneider incorporated periods of stretching at every gait in every session. It helps to promote relaxation but also improves the horse’s balance. This stretching work was important for all horses, but it was especially helpful for horses who ducked behind the contact or were tense. “Your horse must be going to the bit with an open neck,” she said. Later she added, “Show them the way in the stretching, but not without contact.” If you find that your horse comes behind the bit, take your hand down and forward as you activate the hind leg (providing motivation) to stabilize the contact over the back to the bit. You need to keep an even feel on both sides of the mouth, and your horse needs to stretch evenly into both hands. Avoid crossing your hands over your horse’s withers.

8. Ride forward to your hands. “When you need more contact with your horse’s mouth, don’t take your hands higher,” Schneider explained. You can raise them for a moment if you need your horse to come higher

in the poll but only in combination with driving from the hind leg to the bit via a correct seat. Afterward directly take your hands down and in front of the saddle. You can always make your reins shorter, but as you do, remember to keep your hands in front of the saddle. Think about riding your horse longer in the neck to the bit but shorter in the area behind the saddle.

9. Play with your wrist for more freedom in the horse's mouth. You can use your wrist to vibrate your hand, which will help create movement in the horse's mouth and poll, making him lighter in the contact. This is especially helpful if you have a horse who gets strong. Don't use your whole arm because it will be too severe.

Brett Parbery's Training Schedule

Today I'll share with you what I work on each week.

I like to schedule one day to work only on the basics, on the first day of the training week, so that's usually a Monday for me. I call it my Fundamentals Monday, and on this day the session is all about the basic reactions to the aids, and with a laser focus on my core training concepts including the horse being in front of my leg and in my rhythm. This is a fantastic day to concentrate on yourself as a rider and the effectiveness of your aids.

Then one or two days a week are dedicated to training new knowledge into my horses, which I call the Advancing Knowledge days.

You see, my approach to dressage is that we're all in our own way, on the pathway to Grand Prix. Not everyone may end up at Grand Prix and that's totally fine, but I feel that the fun and benefits of dressage come from training up the levels rather than staying at one level for years. I'm not one for trying to win every Novice championship, I'd prefer progression and working towards the best my horse and I can achieve. So, these Advancing Knowledge days are important for that progression.

Then we have Competition Preparation days, on which I pick out lines from tests and ride some to see what works and where the wheels fall off. I don't necessarily ride full tests on these days, but I might ride the canter work or the trot work from a test, or I might simply pull out individual lines and ride the preparations for the movements, rather than the movements themselves.

Riding lines from tests is a discipline that most riders let themselves get a little slack with, and it's such a wasted opportunity because the tests can reveal so much about our training. Use the tests to your advantage!

The lunging or in-hand days unfortunately are usually the days to drop off my weekly schedule if things get tight, but that's a real shame because I do find them very useful for watching my horses. The way they carry themselves, their biomechanics, reveals so much information about how best to work with them under saddle. You can also get a clear idea of how your horse is changing shape from the training, hopefully in a good way!

The trick to these lunging or in-hand days is to stop thinking of them as just exercising your horse. They are actually excellent training opportunities, so work on the consistency of your aids and your expectations of your horse's reactions.

Fun days can be trails, poles, gallops, jumping, beach or forest, whatever you like! Lots of our program members love to include fun days out of the arena, and of course you can also train your dressage outside of the usual arena.

So you can see that this is a far more strategic approach to a training plan than the majority of riders use. It's through this system and mixture of core types of training sessions that real progress can be made.



Tips from the experts . . .

Brett Parbery

You know as well as I do, dressage is a marathon not a sprint, and we need to work through every step of that marathon.

I come across many scenarios of riders saying things like.. “I’m just going to skip elementary and go to medium, the tests are annoying to ride, I can do the higher movements anyway.”

Don't do it!

You would be missing out on vital training opportunities that may very well come back to haunt you, and no one wants a dressage ghost coming to get them.

There is a lot to learn in every level of dressage. The levels are there for a reason, to guide you and to be your map through the training process.

I highly recommend learning how to train each level, and how to ride it in a competition. You don't have to compete extensively at any one level, but you need to be competent enough that you could compete.

Any shortcuts that you might think are beneficial or smart in the short term, will only leave you without tools that you will need later for the higher levels.

I love this sport because of the journey it takes you on, so I encourage you to immerse yourself in every step along the way.

Carl Hester

If you can't halt square on the centre line, it's your fault! It requires training, so to make sure you can do this, teach your horse that he must always stand square, even for mounting and dismounting. To teach your horse to stand square, ask for it along the side of the school. Trot, ask for a few steps of walk, then step forward into halt. He must step forward to halt, not back to halt.

With a horse who is trained to do collected canter, you want to aim for a speed where someone can walk alongside you.

Use leg-yield in canter to make your horse more aware of your legs.

To help you maintain the rhythm while riding, keep a song in your head and sing it to yourself while you ride.

Charlotte Dujardin

Transitions, transitions, transitions

“With a young horse, you have to ride hundreds of transitions, not just one or two,” says Charlotte, while aboard the striking four-year-old Secret Agent. “Although we all want to do the tricks, let me tell you the tricks are the easy part, this is the hard part. If you get this wrong it follows you all the way up.

Allowing the horse to go forward into downwards transitions enables the hind leg to step underneath them without the rider having to alter their frame, Charlotte explains: “On downward transitions, I still have to think forwards. I’m not thinking with my reins, pulling him into walk because that’s a backward transition.

“On upward transitions, I think it’s very important, especially at this age, not to override them with your legs. Because if you start to override you suffocate the horse and it starts to rely on the leg. If you have a horse that’s naturally lazy you have to teach him to go off your legs, and if you have a horse that’s quite hot you have to teach him to accept your leg.

“They don’t have to be perfect transitions, or perfectly balanced – it takes time, dressage is all about time and repetition.”



The FEI Training Scale – Equestrian Australia

1. Rhythm – regularity and tempo

The first step of the training scale that should be established is the rhythm. The regularity is the correct sequence of the footfall, and the tempo is the speed of the rhythm.

The rhythm is the regularity of the beat in all paces. Steps and strides in each variation of the pace should cover equal distances and also be of equal duration remaining in a consistent tempo.

The rhythm should also be maintained through the transitions within a pace and in all turns, also in the corners, as well on straight lines. No exercise can be good if the horse is losing rhythm. A loss of rhythm is often a sign of incorrect training.

2. Suppleness – elasticity and freedom from anxiety

Suppleness, together with rhythm, is an essential aim of the preliminary training phase. Even if the rhythm is maintained, the movement cannot be considered correct unless the horse is working through its back and the muscles are free from tension.

Suppleness is a central theme throughout the schooling. It should never be neglected and should be constantly checked and reinforced.

Only if the horse is physically and mentally free from tension (anxiety) or constraint can it work with suppleness and use itself fully.

The horse's joints should bend and straighten equally on both sides of its body and with each step or stride. The horse should convey the impression that it is putting its whole mind and body into its work.

Lack of suppleness can take many forms, e.g. tightness in the back, severely agitated tail, rhythm faults, hind legs lacking activity, a tense and dry mouth and crookedness.

Indications of suppleness are:

- A content and happy expression – freedom from anxiety.
- The elasticity of the steps – the ability to stretch and contract the musculature smoothly and fluently.
- A quiet mouth gently chewing the bit with an elastic contact.
- A swinging back with the tail carried in a relaxed manner.
- Soft and rhythmical breathing, showing that the horse is mentally and physically relaxed.

The best confirmation and proof of the suppleness is that, when the reins are given, the horse stretches the neck downward and forward to the bit without losing rhythm or balance.

3. Contact – acceptance of the bit and aids/self carriage

Contact is the soft, steady connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. The horse should go rhythmically forward from the rider's driving aids and 'seek' contact with the rider's hand, thus 'going into' the contact. 'the horse seeks the contact, and the rider provides the contact.'

A correct, steady contact allows the horse to find its balance under the rider and a good rhythm in all the paces. The poll should always be the highest point of the neck, except when the horse is being ridden forward/downward with longer reins.

The contact must result from the energy of the active hind legs being transferred over a swinging back to the bit. It is totally wrong to try to obtain the contact by pulling back with the hands. This way of riding will always stop the energy coming through from behind. The horse should go forward confidently into the contact in response to the rider's driving aids.

Indications of good contact are:

- The horse steps forward to the bit through a straight and supple poll.
- The horse accepts an elastic contact with a quiet mouth gently chewing the bit. The tongue is not visible.
- The poll is the highest point.
- The line of the nose is in front of the vertical, and in highly collected exercises at the vertical.
- The frame should never be compressed; in medium and extended paces there should be a visible lengthening of the frame.

4. Impulsion – increased energy from hindquarters

Impulsion is the transmission of controlled, propulsive energy generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the eager horse. Its ultimate expression can be shown only through the horse's soft and swinging back and is guided by a gently contact with the rider's hand.

Impulsion should not be confused with 'action', which refers to the horse's inherent ability to take expressive, ground covering trot steps. If the horse is working with impulsion, the moment of suspension will be more pronounced. However, it should not be exaggerated, because this is associated with incorrect hovering steps that result from tension, a stiff back and resistance.

The most important criteria of impulsion is the time the horse spends in the air rather than on the ground. Impulsion is, therefore, seen only in those pace that have a period of suspension. Therefore, impulsion is only possible in the trot, canter, piaffe and passage. There can be no impulsion in the walk because there is no moment of suspension; therefore, in walk we talk about activity.

Impulsion is about the desire to go forward with the energy and carrying power that is produced from behind and goes to the bridle through a supple and swinging back. Impulsion allows the horse to move in a powerful and athletic way and to show elastic and expressive movement.

The impulsion is of a good quality if the hocks are carried energetically forward and upward immediately after the feet leave the ground, rather than being carried only upward, or being drawn backward. The movement is absorbed by the horse's back muscles, so that the rider can sit softly and go with the movement.

Impulsion is a question of training. The rider uses the horse's natural pace and adds looseness, forward thrust and suppleness to it.

If the horse is pushed so hard that it quickens its steps, the moment of suspension is shortened because it puts its feet down sooner. In this case, even if the regularity is maintained, the tempo is too fast and the impulsion will suffer as a result. Speed, itself, has little to do with impulsion; speed results in more often a flattening of the paces.

The desire to go forward with hind legs that push actively and clearly overtrack in extensions is necessary. The horse covers more ground in medium and extended trot and canter, the hinds legs swinging through and forward in the moment of suspension.

The development and improvement of the impulsion is of fundamental importance. It is important in the development of the forward thrust and the carrying power of the hindquarters. It is also a pre-requisite for straightening the horse and for collection.

5. Straightness – equal bend on both reins

The development of impulsion and straightness is essential to prepare the horse for collection and to make it more supple and through.

Straightening the horse is a never-ending task, since every horse has some degree of natural crookedness.

The horse is straight when its forehand is in line with its hindquarters, that is, when its longitudinal axis is in line with the straight or curved track it is following.

Straightening the horse means also that the horse has to be able to be bent and flexed on both reins equally.

The main reasons for straightening a horse are:

- To help the horse stay healthy and sound through the hind legs being used in the same way, so that the horse's weight is distributed evenly on both sides to prepare the horse for good collection. Only a straight horse can push and collect effectively using its hind legs equally and having an even contact in both reins. Only if the horse is straight can it be supple and 'through' equally in both directions.
- If the horse is straight, the hind legs will push towards the centre of gravity.

6. Collection – engagement and balance

The aim of the collection is:

- To further develop and improve the equilibrium of the horse, which has been more or less displaced by the additional weights of the rider.

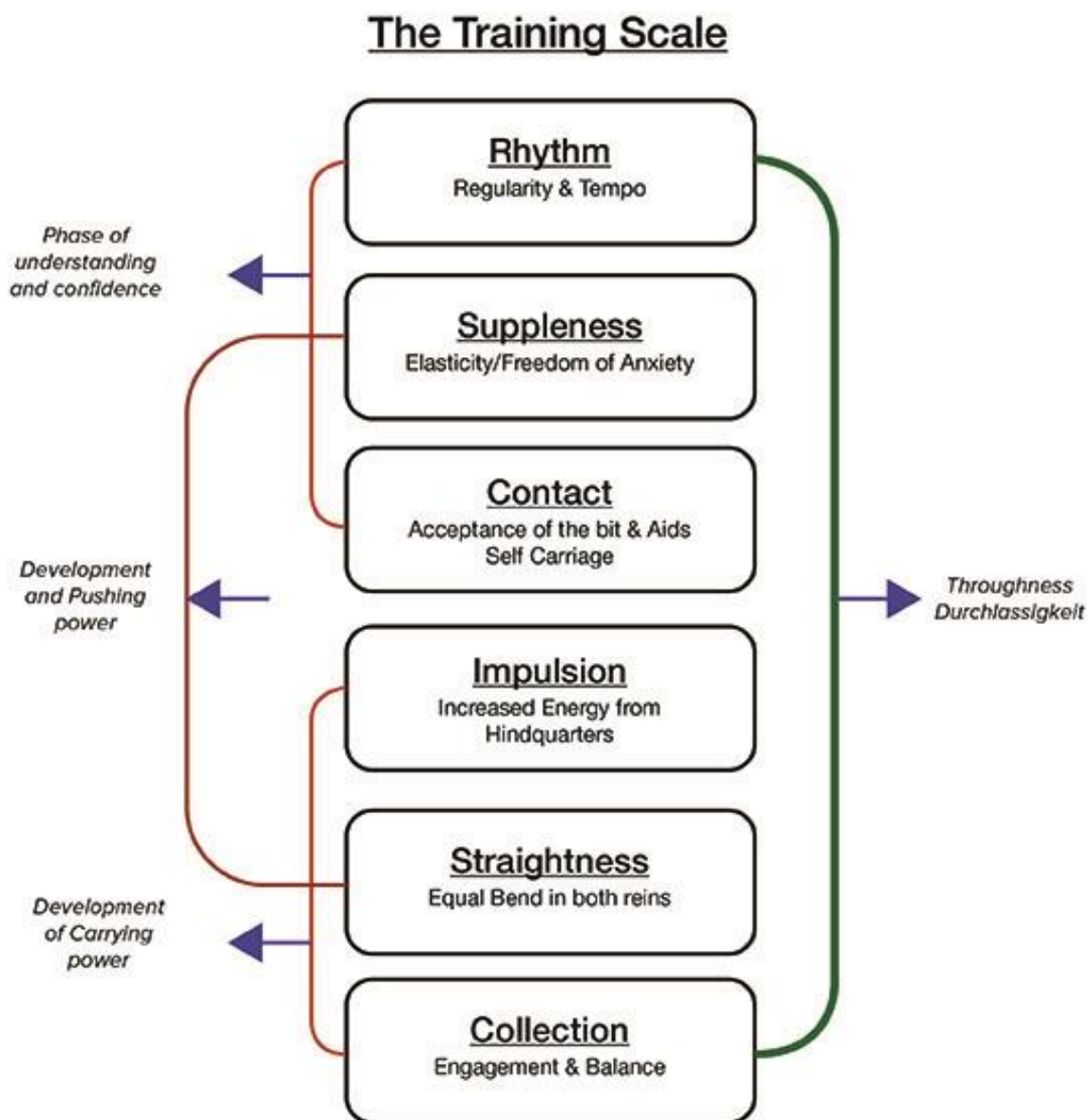
- To develop and increase the horse's ability to lower and engage its hindquarters for the benefit of the lightness and mobility of its forehand.
- To add to the 'ease and carriage' of the horse thereby making it more pleasurable to ride.
- Collection is developed through the use of half-halts and the use of lateral movements shoulder-in, travers, renvers, and half pass.

Collection is improved by the use of the seat and legs and containing hands to engage the hind legs.

The joints bend and are supple so the hind legs can step forward under the horse's body.

However, the hind legs should not be engaged so far forward under the horse, that they shorten the base support excessively, thereby impeding the movement. In such a case, the line of the back would be lengthened and raised too much in relation to the supporting base of the legs, the stability would be impaired and the horse would have difficulty in finding harmonious and correct balance.

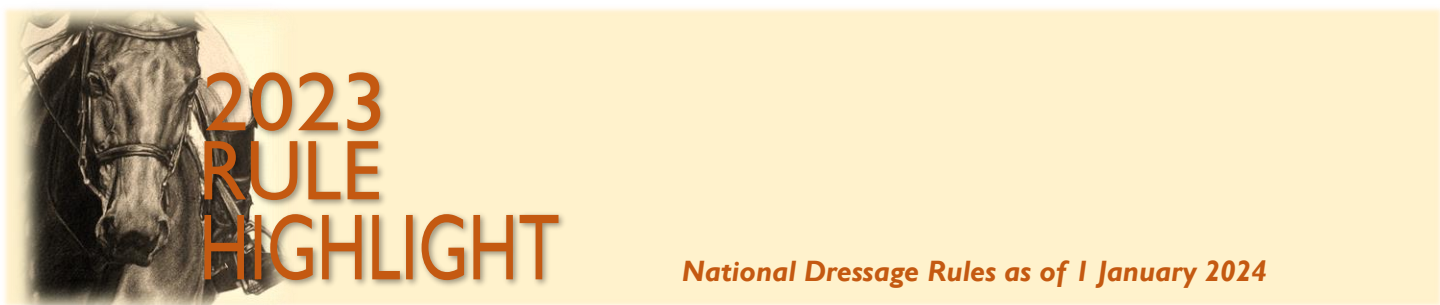
On the other hand, a horse with an over-long base of support, which is unable or unwilling to engage his hind legs forward under its body, will never achieve acceptable collection, characterised by 'ease and carriage' as well as a lively impulsion originating from the activity of the hindquarters



The Pursuit of Suppleness – Guillaume Henry

Practical Horseman

<https://practicalhorsemanmag.com/training/the-pursuit-of-suppleness/?fbclid=IwAR32bCLpn2x-hPIIJIubcQPAf4V45U-B2Esf2jZUmJCF2OxTh46Q9FDEdTQ>



Some changes that came into effect in January 2024 are highlighted below:

1.5 Sensory Hair

A horse's sensory hairs may not be clipped and/or shaven or otherwise modified in any way. Individual sensory hairs may be removed by a veterinarian to prevent pain or discomfort for the horse. Areas of hair that must be clipped, shaven, or removed to allow veterinary treatment are exempt from this rule. Horses found competing with clipped/shaven/otherwise modified sensory hairs will be eliminated from the event.

3.4 Timing of the draw

- a) it is strongly recommended to allow 60 to 90 minutes between tests for the same horse, and at least 90 minutes at the FEI levels as these are more strenuous tests
- b) where a rider has more than one horse in a competition, 90 minutes should be timetabled between rides to allow rider to go from one horse to the other, however riders may opt for less on the day of event

3.23 Fall or injury to horse or rider

In the event of a fall by horse or rider or other traumatic incident the following applies:

- a) it is the decision of the OC's designated first aid official to assess whether the rider may continue to compete at the event without first getting a medical clearance
- b) where a knock to the rider's head or body that transmits a force to the head is suspected, refer to [Annex G](#) -the EA Concussion Policy applies
- c) in the case of the horse, a vet or horse welfare officer will assess if the horse can continue to compete in that event

4.3 Scratchings/Withdrawals

In regards to any scratching or withdrawing from a test or competition:

- a) a competitor may withdraw any or all of the horses that he/she has entered, subject to the Conditions of Entry
- b) a refund may only be made if documented proof (i.e. veterinary or medical certificate) is produced within 24 hours of the completion of the event to the Event Secretary
- c) a refund shall be a minimum of 50% of the entry fee

Rule	Various throughout rulebook
Heading	Gear Checker
Justification	'Gear Checker' obsolete, Stewards are now compulsory at all official competitive events.
Revised Rule	
'Gear Checker' obsolete to be changed to 'steward' or 'approved representative of the steward' throughout the rulebook.	

4.4 Gear check

- a) a gear check is compulsory for each test and failure to have a gear check will entail elimination
- b) all competitors must present to the Steward or gear checker
- c) unless otherwise specified in the schedule or on the notice board the gear check for each test will take place prior to each test
- d) however, in circumstances where a horse is unsettled then the combination may request to have a gear check after their test – refer also to rule [6.4.1e](#), [6.4.1f](#)
- e) failure to have a gear check will incur elimination
- f) the bit inspection should not be checked until after the test unless requested by the competitor

1.8 Conflict of interest for Officials

Conflicts must be avoided whenever practicable. For the guidelines relating to any conflict of interest, refer to EA General Regulations, Article 158 and please note the following additions as detailed below.

Conflict of interest is defined as - Any personal, professional or financial relationship, including relationships of family members that could influence or be perceived to influence objectivity when representing or conducting business or other dealings for or on behalf of EA.

1.8.1 People may not officiate as a judge of an event if:

They have any personal, professional or financial relationship, including relationships of family members that could influence or be perceived to influence objectivity, including but not limited to:

- a) they are officiating as a veterinary officer for the same event
- b) they are a Chef d'Equipe or team official for competitors entered in the event

1.8.2 People may not officiate as a judge of a competition if:

They have any personal, professional or financial relationship, including relationships of family members that could influence or be perceived to influence objectivity, including but not limited to:

- a) a rider in the competition is a family member
- b) they are in a National Elite Squad and are asked to judge a fellow member of the same squad in a Grand Prix competition
- c) they have given or ridden in a riding clinic within 2 weeks prior to the event and a rider, coach or horse who has participated in that clinic will be in the competition
- d) they are providing or receiving private billeted accommodation from/to a competitor scheduled to be in the competition they are judging
- e) they are an owner or part owner of a horse taking part in that competition
- f) they have given or received regular training/coaching from/to a horse and/or rider taking part in the competition
- g) they have a financial interest in a horse in the competition
- h) they are an employee or employer of a competitor in the competition
- i) when accepting judging invitations, a judge must declare a conflict of interest in any person or horse who has entered if, within 12 months immediately preceding the event, they have:
 - owned/part owned
 - or had any other business interest in that horse and/or rider
- j) Judge Educators/Mentors must also follow these principles when carrying out shadow judging/sit-in
- k) they have assessed riders at a protocol session within two weeks of the competition

3.6 Arena requirements

Arenas should be set out to the dimensions shown in the diagram in [Annex A](#). The arena(s):

- a) should be level and separated from the public (including photographers and video operators) by a distance all round of 15 metres if possible but at least 10 metres
- b) must consist of a low continuous surround/fence about 0.3 metres high
- c) are to be placed at least 10 metres apart, preferably 15 metres if room permits
- d) should be positioned where judges are not facing the sun
- e) the letters placed around the arena should be clearly visible and be placed approximately 0.5 metres outside the arena fence
- f) the centre line must have the letter A placed in line (not offset) with C at least 10 metres (preferably 15 metres) back from the arena to allow horses a straight track to enter the arena. The width of the entrance must be at least 2 metres and not greater than 4 metres
- g) should include a marker on the continuous arena surround/fence, level with, and in addition to, the letter concerned

The following are not permitted in the construction of an arena:

- h) stakes which are driven into the ground
- i) unbreakable rope
- j) unbreakable chain
- k) unbreakable tape
- l) line marking or rope on the ground
- m) thin poles on the ground (e.g. jumping rails)

Stewards

As of 1 January 2024 all Dressage Tasmania competitions must have an accredited Equestrian Australia dressage Steward in attendance.

The following are updates Rules from the **National Dressage Rules as of 1 January 2024**.

6.4 Stewards

A steward is a trained, accredited EA or FEI official.

Wherever possible an accredited Steward should be appointed to an event. As of 1 January 2024, all competitive events will be required to have a Level 1 or higher Steward appointed to the event.

The following categories of accredited Stewards exist:

- a) Steward General Australia Dressage
- b) FEI Stewards (levels 1,2,3) - 3 is the highest level
- c) Nationally accredited Stewards Level 1 & 2 (2 is highest)

The following additional categories of non-accredited assistants exist

- d) national candidate stewards (in training, not yet qualified and hold no official responsibility, may carry out all steward duties under the supervision of an accredited steward, may work as a non-accredited gear checker)
- e) non-accredited gear checkers may also be appointed to attend the gear check area at events to assist in the absence of an accredited steward or to assist the appointed steward at larger events. Non-accredited gear checkers hold no official capacity, will not make any decisions on their own nor interpret any rules on their own. They are fully reportable to an Accredited Steward if appointed or the Head of the Ground Jury if no accredited steward is appointed

6.4.1 Steward's Responsibilities

Stewards are responsible for ensuring the welfare of horses is upheld, that the rules and a fair playing field for the event are adhered to and that events are conducted safely.

At the Gear Check Area: A trained Steward is responsible for:

- a) checking each competitor off the draw
- b) check competition arenas set-up, safety, surface
- c) communicate with the organising committee
- d) guiding the rider on the legality of the saddlery, equipment and dress referred to in [Section 5](#) and the current equipment annex
- e) checking the gear of each competitor for each test, either before the test or as specified in the schedule or on the notice board such as immediately after the tests is completed
- f) if the bit/bridle is in question, in which case any inspection must be done immediately after the completion of the test
 - if this inspection requires the removal of the bridle, a head collar/halter must be made available for this purpose or the horse can be taken to a safer environment such as a stable
 - any removal of equipment must be done by the rider or their agent
- g) ensuring that a competitor's gear check is completed to allow sufficient time for them to proceed to the competition arena and adhere to the time draw. If a problem arises during a gear check which may cause a delay, the competitor or their agent must be requested to re-present to the gear check immediately after their test concludes
- h) consulting with the TD or, in their absence, a member of the Ground Jury the Chief Judge if doubt exists regarding any item of saddlery or other equipment
- i) having a 1.0m and a 1.2 m gauge accessible (e.g. tube, rod, tape measure, mark on fence) to ensure compliance of competitor's whip
- j) using disposable surgical/protective gloves – one new pair for each horse – if inspecting the bridle (mouth area), checking the nose band, touching horse or spurs
- k) every consideration must be given to not disturbing the harmony of the horse and rider prior to them entering the competition area
- l) only the rider or their agent may alter any equipment the gear steward must not alter any gear. If gear is too tight, loose or incorrectly fitted, the rider or their agent must make the necessary adjustments
- m) it remains the full responsibility of the rider to comply with the equipment rules as outlined
- n) when an accredited steward has been appointed, if a rider does not have their gear checked they will incur elimination

- o) it is the responsibility of the OC to provide preferably at least one accredited Steward for an event. A volunteer may attend the gear check if an accredited Steward is not available (see rule 6.5 e)
- p) at club level if an accredited steward is appointed they should advise and supervise the volunteer gear checkers
- q) supervise warm-up areas
- r) ensure welfare of the horse is paramount
- s) the issue of yellow warning cards where warranted

6.4.1.1 If an accredited steward is not appointed to an event a non-accredited gear checker may take on the following roles:

- a) mark each competitor off the draw as presented to the gear check area
- b) report to the head of the ground jury (C Judge) if a competitor does not present to the Gear Check area, as this will incur elimination
- c) observing the gear of each competitor for each test, either before the test or as specified in the schedule or on the notice board
- d) ensure that a competitor's leave the gear check area in sufficient time for them to proceed to the competition arena and adhere to the time draw. If a problem arises during a gear check which may cause a delay, the competitor or their agent must be requested to re-present to the gear check immediately after their test concludes
- e) consulting with the TD or accredited Gear Steward, in their absence, the Chief Judge if doubt exist regarding any item if saddlery or other equipment
- f) having a 1.0m and a 1.2m gauge accessible (e.g. tube, rod, tape measure, mark on fence) to ensure compliance of competitor's whip
- g) every consideration must be given to not disturbing the harmony of the horse and rider prior to them entering the competition area
- h) the gear checker must not alter any gear. If the gear is too tight, loose or incorrectly fitted, the rider or their agent must make the necessary adjustments Refer to Section 5 rule 5.12 for a table of allowable items of dress, saddlery and equipment
- i) the gear checker must not touch the horse or rider unless under the supervision of an Accredited Steward

Refer to Section 5 rule 5.12 for a table of allowable items of dress, saddlery and equipment

EA Equipment Annex – Dressage Rules

The new Equestrian Australia Equipment Annex - Version 22 - 04.04.2023 has been effective since **23 April 2023**. Access through the EA Dressage Rules Webpage: <https://www.equestrian.org.au/Dressage-rules>

The summary of changes to the National Dressage Rules effective 1 January 2023 is now available at this link: [Summary - Dressage Rule Changes 1 January 2023 23112022.pdf \(equestrian.org.au\)](#)

Friendly reminders

- Judges who do not hold a current Working with Vulnerable People registration/card, will not be included on the Equestrian Australia Judges' List.
- Riders may now ride only two tests a day at any level.
- Numbers at a height of 3.5-4cm need to be visible on BOTH SIDES of a saddle pad or bridle when competing and BOTH SIDES of a halter at any other time at Dressage Tasmania events.
- As of 1 January 2024 EA dressage competitions must have an accredited EA Steward on duty. A Steward or Steward-appointed person is necessary to check gear at competitions. Checking of gear is undertaken AFTER a test.

Please check the current Dressage Rules and Equipment Annex before attending Dressage Tasmania events to ensure your equipment is correct, to prevent any surprises!

Values



Dedication	Committed to supporting dressage in Tasmania.
Respect	Everyone is valued and treated accordingly.
Excellence	Striving to provide the best possible experience.
Solidarity	We are all in this together.
Safety	Horse and rider welfare is the priority.
Access	An environment where everyone is welcome.
Growth	Nurturing membership development.
Encouragement	Dressage as a positive experience.

Your feedback matters!

Members are encouraged to have input into the way we do dressage in Tasmania. Ideas and ways of improvement are welcome.

Email dressagetasmania@outlook.com or your Zone contact.

Likewise, if you think of anything you'd like included in future newsletters, let us know.

Web links

[Dressage Tasmania \(equestrian.org.au\)](http://equestrian.org.au)
[Horse Registration | Equestrian Tasmania](#)
[Your Membership | Equestrian Tasmania](#)
[Insurance | Equestrian Australia](#)
[Medication Control | Equestrian Tasmania](#)
[Discipline rules & regulations | Equestrian Australia](#)

Dressage Tasmania web site:

<https://www.tas.equestrian.org.au/dressage/>

Dressage Tasmania E-mail:

dressagetasmania@outlook.com



<https://www.facebook.com/dressagetasmania>