

Online Horse Shows by DJ Sproat

In today's high-tech world of e-mail, instant messaging, Voice-over-IP communication, Internet-based worldwide information access, on-line broadcasting of news and sports, web-based conferences and social activities such as Facebook and YouTube, it was only a matter of time before someone came up with on-line animal shows.

Apparently this is not completely brand-new idea. Anita Messenger advised that a group of Dairy goat breeders were looking at starting a show on the Internet so they would not be forced into attending shows sanctioned by the ADGA. With all the concerns in the US about NAIS, and the issues around moving animals off property and to show locations, the idea of On-line Showing may be a most practical solution.

On-line horse Shows could provide a myriad of additional benefits to the owners; show organisers, exhibitors and spectators alike. For example, it would literally allow horses living anywhere in the world to compete "together" without the hassle, stress, cost and time involved in travelling to a show grounds. Just think - no packing of truck and trailer; no getting up at some ungodly hour to bathe horses, load and hit the road; no bleary-eyed drives clutching your coffee cup; no stressed horses or potential for injuries in transit; no fussing around to find a good parking spot at the show grounds (and trying to back that trailer up); no finding something has been forgotten, begging your fellow show people to borrow something to make do, then racing around to make entries, pick up numbers, locate water, etc.. Even better, no concerns about weather too hot, too cold, too windy, too stormy, too humid, too dry, too wet, too buggy, etc. In addition to these conveniences, On-line Showing would also deliver a significant environmental benefit by avoiding having hoards of heavy-duty fuel-burning vehicles spewing emissions into the air. And imagine the fuel money saved! Not to mention stall fees, grounds fees, drug test fees, etc.

In addition, the potential for disease transmission (both horse and human) is eliminated. No concern about picking up colds, flu, strangles, etc. Or about carrying them home to your barn and neighbors.

For show organizers, the benefits include no longer needing to find a venue for the shows and all the associated problems of hiring or finding volunteers for ring crews, stewards, announcers, security, first-aid services, food vendors, clean-up, etc. Plus, many shows have folded or not even gotten off the ground recently due to the costs of insurance and liability protection. With On-line Shows, this is not a concern. The overall costs of running an on-line show are significantly reduced - as are the risks associated with having a number of horses, people and vehicles in one place; the worries of keeping everything organized, running smoothly and on schedule; and the potential impact of uncontrollable events such as bad weather.

Meanwhile, for spectators, the performances could be viewed by anyone in the world, anytime at their convenience.

And it gets even better. For the show person, on-line deliver means the opportunity to turn in your very best performance. No longer worry about having an "off-day" after

weeks of preparation, or tripping over your own feet in the halter class or about your horse stumbling right in front of the judge, or about him being excessively bothered by flies and shaking his head or wringing his tail, or being boxed in by other horses just as you were ready to make a spectacular canter departure. Instead, you get to show your horse to his best advantage and show what he really can do. So, every class is judged based on each competitor's best-submitted performance not just, which horses make, the least mistakes or have the better luck that day.

If this all sounds good to you you can participate today!

www.MyHorseShowOnline.com

Have a look at their website. They have had 2 shows so far. And some pretty nice performances.

The website provides lots of information including instructions:

1. Pick your favourite class or classes and use the online entry form to enter. Your number and the class performance instructions will be sent to you by e-mail. (You may enter as many classes as you like, and as often as you like.)
2. When you're ready, video your class performance, and then load your video to a video hosting web site. (YouTube or PhotoBucket).

They offer a large variety of classes such as: Lead-line, Walk-trot, Western Pleasure, Western Horsemanship, English Pleasure, English Equitation, Hunter Under Saddle, Hunter Hack, Pleasure Pony, Reining, Showmanship, Hunter In Hand and Lunge line.

While On-line Shows may be the way of the future, there are some classes and events not suited to this medium. Jumper, Hunter over fences, Trail classes, and timed events such as Games may be unworkable since it would be hard to ensure everyone was dealing with the same level of obstacles, difficulty or timers. Activities such as Eventing, Combined driving and long-distance riding / driving still require access to specialised equipment or large areas. However, segments of these, as well as many other events, could lend themselves well to On-line Shows such as Dressage tests, a variety of Pleasure driving and Carriage classes, Halter classes, Sport horse, Western Riding, possibly classes like Cutting, Working Ranch horse and even fun stuff like Costume and Jack Benny / Grooms classes.

Let's hope On-line Showing really takes off, AND keeps its current non-political, performance-based focus. It gives pretty much everyone a chance to show off their pride and joy and see some results from all their hard work. Including those too far away to get to specialty events, those without the ability to travel, or people unable to afford fancy clothes, tack and high fees. It also makes showing accessible to those with a disability that may make travelling to events, or showing in a group, very uncomfortable. On-line Showing opens up the possibilities to more people and more horses. What a wonderful opportunity.



ONLINE HORSE SHOWING

DJ SPROAT



Online Horse Shows – Part II

In our last issue, we talked about the new world of On-line horse showing. You may recall the procedure highlighted in that article was one where you would make a video of you and horse performing the requirements of the class, then submit it for judging against similar videos. This is a great method and allows for a very good comparison of horses and performances. However, it does mean you need access to a digital camcorder; you need someone to video you, and you may also need the ability to edit your video. And, of course, you need the ability to upload video to the website – which could be a bit time-consuming, especially if you are on dial-up service.

So, in addition to this method there are several "Virtual shows" active on the Internet offering a system whereby you can simply submit a picture or two. These shows also offer a large variety of classes such as Halter, Showmanship, Pleasure, Trail and Driving. Some also have a number of fun classes such as Costume and Leadline. While this style of show cannot judge entries based on actual performances in motion, they are still a fun way to have a bit of a competition against other folks and horses.

One example is the Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society Virtual Show. This is being operated as a fund-raising activity by a horse-rescue organisation. The show runs approximately every six months. You can see the entries and top placings from past shows at their website. The latest one just completed and the results posted. Have a look.

www.bluebonnetequine.org/virtualshow/april2008show.htm

There are several Morabs represented – including LM Mystery Destiny (winner of the Pleasure Type Mares 2 and Over class), my own Windmere Mocha Royale and GM Regal Magic, plus my first Morab (long deceased), Azkhyme. I also entered my Morgan, Alexander Royalton – who took overall Reserve High Point horse (check him out in the Costume class).

Virtual shows offer the benefit of being able to compete against yourself – meaning you can enter two or more horses in the same performance or halter class and not have to find extra riders, drivers or handlers for them all. Now doesn't that make life simpler!

In some photo shows you can also use older photos - handy if you and your horse are no longer in show-shape (like me and mine)! You could even enter photos of horses who are no longer with us, such as my Khyme, rather a nice tribute to a departed friend.

And here is another bonus to virtual shows – the entries and results can often be seen and revisited for a long time after the show has been completed. Haven't you sometimes wished to have a good look at the other entries at a show – but you were too busy with your own horse at the time? Well, now you can see them – all from the comfort of your home and at your convenience.

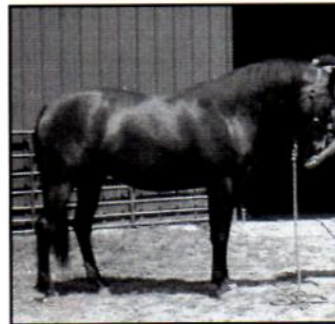
For example, check out these results from the Blue Bonnet Equine March 2006 show:

www.bluebonnetequine.org/virtualshow/2ndvirtualshow.htm

Now, as you will probably notice when you review virtual show websites, there is a wide range of types, styles and quality of entries. You might be tempted to think this makes on-line showing a waste of time – especially if your opinion is that the bulk of the competition does not seem very "competitive". However, compare this to your average local show. The situation is likely much the same – everyone always doing their best, and often a couple of the entries tend to stand out from the crowd and take most of the top placings. Yet, rarely would anyone say they wasted their time showing, because the other entries weren't challenging or competitive enough. As long as the judging was fair and everyone had some fun, then everyone can be proud of what they achieved. The top placings deserve to be where they are and they give everyone a standard for comparison. The same should be said for an On-line show.

Way of the Future

While it is true the majority of available on-line shows are rather informal with a "come as you are" look and feel, this can be expected to change as they become more popular. It is inevitable that people will begin to ratchet up their presentations to earn top placings. Photos will start to be taken expressly for the show entry – not just ones pulled from the old photo album. Videos will start to show more polish and editing. Clothing, tack and even the background of the photos and videos will become details not to be overlooked by the serious competitor. This will become especially true as certain shows gain recognised status.



The photo of LM Mystery Destiny that won her 1st place.

The "OnLine Horse Show" is a large Virtual show based out of Australia. It was started, in part, as a response to Australia's issue with Equine Flu and the subsequent lock-down on the transportation of horses. While it is hosted by an Arabian horse club, it is a multi-breed show. All classes are currently line classes.

www.onlinehorseshow.net

The show drew 465 entries to their most recent version and the quality of entries appears to have been very high. In terms of recognition, the Arabian Horse Society of Australia has accepted placing in this show as qualifying for merit point accumulation. Unfortunately for us, it is only open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.

With time, more virtual shows are sure to make themselves available. North America and other global locations will certainly offer similar opportunities. Ideally, many shows will be open to international participants, not isolated by countries. Events will likely stratify into different categories and recognition levels, just as live showing has today – allowing opportunities for all makes and models of competitors. Equine organisations and breed associations will (eventually) see the promotional possibilities that virtual showing opens up and will eagerly jump on the bandwagon. The future could be pretty exciting!

Remember, the whole point of any show is to show off your horse, compare yourself and your horse to others, see how all your work is paying off AND to have some fun. Virtual shows allow this – with the added pleasure of low cost and lower stress.