



# PERFORMANCE

By Grace Greenlee, GVHS Evaluator

Performance Evaluations are multifunctional with several objectives:

- Give some idea of the horse's inclination and ability in a given discipline;
- Give the owner some direction as to how to best utilize the horse's natural ability; and
- Give a reward for the talented, well trained, responsive horse by allowing him to earn recognition for his accomplishments.

## ***The Score: What Does it Represent?***

Approximately 30% of the score represents the indicated natural ability of the horse to perform correct gaits (walk, trot/jog, canter/lope and extensions of the preceding as required by the discipline) with a strong free and natural stride which is powerful and correct and utilizes the entire body for ultimate gait efficiency. There is both reach (over stride) in the gait and natural collection as the horse naturally maintains his hocks under his body (in front of the point of his buttocks) as he moves. The perfect gait is a combination of straightness, correct engagement and the proper style for a Gypsy Vanner; a small fancy draft horse developed for pulling, but with additional ability as a riding horse making him suitable for either pulling the van or being ridden, and doing both with enough style and snap to "impress the neighbors".

Approximately 50% of the score is based on the horse's correct body position as he performs lines and curves at the different gaits as well as halts and backs. The horse's body position is observed and scored because it is indicative of his natural self carriage, calmness, willingness and balance. This is displayed by the horse's ability and willingness to respond,

relax and move easily and in line with the line of movement (straight line, circle, partial circle, etc.) when directed to do so by the rider. The high scorer moves forward powerfully (power does NOT equal fast) without resistance or stiffness throughout his entire body. Note that body position that is in any way forced, stiff or intimidated is not desired. Scores for multiple elements are given within this area. See below.

- 1) ***Upward transitions:*** The horse should step up without resistance and with an engaged yet relaxed body, maintaining frame and free forward motion while changing the gait. Any reluctance, bracing, resistance or stiffness is not desired and is penalized by the score. Some of the movements that indicate resistance are: body twisting or turning, more than marginal raising of head, stiffness of shoulders, dropping of back, a more than marginal increase of speed of the original gait as the transition is performed.
- 2) ***Downward transitions:*** The horse should gather his body under himself by relaxing his back upward, collecting his hindquarters under his body and dropping to the new gait without loss of frame (i.e. he does NOT raise his head to avoid, drop his back or brace against his rider's request for the downward transition). The effect should be one gait flowing into the other with ease and balance.
- 3) ***Flexion:*** As the horse moves forward without stiffness, with back up and with hindquarters engaged he allows his entire body to follow the desired curve of the designated path. The path may be a straight line, a full circle, a corner (which is a portion of a circle), a serpentine (a series of half circles) or any other path designated by the rider. To understand this envision a diagram where the line of the path is, from horse nose to tail head, running through the exact middle of the



# EVALUATIONS

horse, as viewed from above as the horse performs the movement.

- 4) **Halts and Backs:** For a correct halt the horse comes to a balanced stop while continuing to maintain a slight shift of weight to the hindquarters so that he does not become heavy on the forehand and braces to a stop rather than going smoothly from a forward motion to a standstill while still keeping his body balanced and his weight slightly to the rear. From this balanced halt he can then respond, with a slight gathering of muscles, to an indication by his rider and easily move forward or backward as requested. Backs should be straight, willing and unhurried but not dragging or resistant. The correct back ranges from a diagonal gait with the diagonal footfalls landing together or almost together as the horse progresses backward to a "four-beat back" basically a walk backwards. A lateral movement back is never considered correct. The horse's spine must be relaxed upward, the movement straight backward with the neck acting as a balance arm for the body. The frame should be maintained as it was for correct forward movement. Dropping the spine, raising the head, gaping the mouth and twisting or moving to the side are all actions noting resistance and are elements of an incorrect back and are to be penalized with a lower score.
- 5) The last portion of this 50% of the score is the general balance of the horse, the lightness of the forehand, general engagement of the hindquarters, impulsion, strength and elasticity of the gaits. These elements are viewed and scored while all the above (transitions, halts, backs, curves and straight lines) are being demonstrated.

The last 20% of the score is the submission of the horse to the equipment and to the rider. The horse must be "quiet" on the bit neither chewing, gaping, bracing against nor avoiding the bit. His mouth is relaxed onto the bit and he "carries the tack" rather than working against it whether this is the bit/bridle/saddle or the bit/harness/carriage. He responds willingly to the pressure of the tack and rider rather than fighting against it. His overall attitude is willing, responsive and confident in performing as requested, rather than appearing unhappy, aggressive, irritated, afraid or uncertain.

## **What the Numbers Mean**

All the above items, or in some cases combinations of items, are scored on a scale of 1 through 10 with 1 being VERY POOR (totally unacceptable) and 10 being IDEAL (virtually perfect). A score of 6 is considered SATISFACTORY (average). A 7 is GOOD (a bit above average) and a 9 is EXCELLENT.

Once the elements are given numerical value the figures are then added together for the final score.

## **Hints for a Better Performance Evaluation**

As you practice to do the performance evaluation, and as you perform it for a score, break each element down and determine what you are trying to accomplish in each. Make each one a goal within itself. Strive to meet that goal of the element you are performing, then move on to the next element.

Stay "soft" (relaxed) and responsive just as you require your horse to do. You will both do better for it.

DO NOT rush ANYTHING. This is NOT a timed event!

Set your horse up for each element as you approach it. Let him know that you are about to ask for something and that he should pay attention. Don't spring anything on him, it is like saying "BOO", it will make him stiffen. Do not be sudden or abrupt with him or he will stiffen and lose the very responsiveness which you are trying to present.



**FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS:** Do not expect the horse to pay more attention to you than you are willing to pay attention to him! Forget the audience, forget the evaluators, and forget the others who performed before you;

**RIDE/ DRIVE YOUR HORSE.**

Remember, we, the evaluators, are here to see you have a great performance. We want to give you ALL 10's. But, generally, no full ride/ drive is Ideal (perfect), so, just do your best, relax and ride/ drive as if you were in your home arena having a great practice session!

***Have a great performance evaluation!***



### OBJECTIVES:

Give some idea of the horse's inclination and ability in a given discipline;

Give the owner some direction as to how to best utilize the horse's natural ability; and

Give a reward for the talented, well trained, responsive horse by allowing him to earn recognition for his accomplishments.

### Gypsy Vanner Horse Society Performance Evaluation Score Sheet

Each element listed below will receive a score from 1 to 10 based on the scale below:

Very Poor	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Below Average	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Ideal
1	2-3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**SECTION I:** This section is evaluated on **NATURAL ABILITY** at the gait *as described in the GVHS Breed Standard*; gait elements include, but are not limited to, length of stride, quality, straightness, engagement.

Element being scored	Score	Driving (x1.5)	Comments
Walk, working walk, extended walk, free walk			
Trot/jog, extended trot/jog			
Canter/lope, extended lope (Western only)			

- No canter score for DRIVING. Multiply walk and trot scores by 1.5.

**SECTION II:** This section is evaluated on the **EXECUTION** of the element on the day of the evaluation. Score based on correctness in the performance of the element.

Element being scored	Score	Comments
Transitions up (balance, form/frame/self-carriage and calmness)		
Transitions down (balance, form/frame/ self-carriage & calmness)		
Flexion (correct bends showing balance and ease of movement)		
Halts (50%) & Backs (50%) Straightness, willingness, attentiveness, unhurried		
General Balance, lightness of forehand, strength of gaits, impulsion, elasticity		

**SECTION III:** This section is evaluated on the **EXECUTION** of the element on the day of the evaluation with special emphasis on submission, attitude, attention and obedience.

Element being scored	Score	Comments
Acceptance of the bit and response to aids		
Submission to the rider/driver (obedient, attentive, willing, confident & willfully guided)		

**TOTAL POINTS:**

Name of Horse \_\_\_\_\_ Registration# \_\_\_\_\_

Horse's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Discipline: ENGLISH WESTERN DRIVING (circle one)

Evaluators Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Location: \_\_\_\_\_