



**2025 USHJA NATIONAL HUNTER DERBY SPECIFICATIONS**  
*Changes from 2024 marked in bold italic and underlined.*

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## **2025 USHJA NATIONAL HUNTER DERBY SPECIFICATIONS**

\*Effective for competitions starting December 1, 2024, to November 30, 2025

### **I. Membership and Participation Requirements**

- A. Riders, owners, and trainers must be current Active members of USEF and USHJA to participate in this class. (see GR202).
- B. Horses and ponies must be registered with USHJA to participate in this class.
- C. Exception: Foreign residents and horses and ponies in good standing with their National Federation are eligible to compete in this class but will not receive points unless they follow I.A. and I.B.
- D. USHJA **National and** Zone HOTY bonus points will only be awarded if the owner is a current Active member of USEF and USHJA and the horse is recorded with USEF and registered with USHJA.
- E. Money won will only count for any USHJA National Hunter Derby standings or awards if the rider, owner and trainer are current Active members of USEF and USHJA, and the horse is registered with USHJA.
- F. Competition management is required to run the class if there are twelve (12) or more entries. They may choose to run the class with twelve (12) or less entries.
- G. The number of horses a rider can compete in a National Hunter Derby may be limited if so specified in the prize list.
- H. The prize list may specify that in order to be eligible to compete in a National Hunter Derby, a horse must compete in one (1) or two (2) classes at the same competition.
- I. The same horse may not compete in the USHJA National Hunter Derby and the USHJA International Hunter Derby at the same competition.
- J. Competing in the USHJA National Hunter Derby does not qualify a horse or rider for the USHJA International Hunter Derby Championship.
- K. **Soundness** -Horses entered in this class **are required to trot a circle on a loose rein at the end of the over fences phase listed below. Horses may be asked to return to the ring and trot another circle at the judge's discretion. Judges have the authority to disqualify a horse if deemed unsound. The hand jog is not required** Any unsoundness during the competition will be reflected in the scores from the judges (**GR1033.6**).
  - a. **Traditional Format – Horses must trot a circle for soundness at the conclusion of the Classic Round. If the class is held over two days, horses are required to trot a circle on a loose rein at the end of both Classic and Handy Rounds.**
  - b. **Hunt and Go Format – horses must trot a circle for soundness at the conclusion of the Handy Round phase.**
- L. In accordance with HU 174.14 the same horse-and-rider combination must compete in both rounds of the National Hunter Derby.  
Attire: Refer to HU107 in the USEF Rule Book for current specifications. **Due to inclement weather, competition management may excuse hunt coats or allow waterproof outerwear so long as the exhibitor's back number is worn correctly and visible.**

### **II. Zone HOTY Points and Awards**

- A. In order for National Hunter Derby **National and** Zone HOTY points to be awarded, riders must complete a USHJA Exhibitor Declaration Form prior to the conclusion of the competition.
- B. Points accrued by horses shown by Professionals may be awarded to the declared Green Hunter 3'0", Green Hunter 3'3", Performance Hunter 3'3", Small Hunter, Young Hunter 5 and under- 2'9", Young Hunter 6 and under- 3', or Young Hunter 7 and under- 3'3".
- C. Points accrued by horses shown by Juniors or Amateurs may be awarded to the declared Green Hunter 3'0", Green Hunter 3'3" Performance Hunter 3'3", or the applicable Children's-Horse, Pony, Adult Amateur, Amateur Owner 3'3", Small Hunter or Junior Hunter 3'3, Young Hunter 5 and under- 2'9", Young Hunter 6 and under- 3', or Young Hunter 7 and under- 3'3".

D. The money won and points won in the USHJA National Hunter Derby will only be awarded towards a declared Hunter section for HOTY points if a horse competes in the declared section a minimum of one (1) time during the competition year.

E. At Channel I (Premier or National) rated competitions, or competitions approved for Special Competition status, National and Zone HOTY points will be awarded as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> – 75	7 <sup>th</sup> – 23
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 60	8 <sup>th</sup> – 15
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 54	9 <sup>th</sup> – 10
4 <sup>th</sup> – 45	10 <sup>th</sup> – 7
5 <sup>th</sup> – 38	11 <sup>th</sup> – 5
6 <sup>th</sup> – 30	12 <sup>th</sup> – 3

F. At Channel II (Regional) rated competitions, National and Zone HOTY points will be awarded as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> – 50	7 <sup>th</sup> – 15
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 40	8 <sup>th</sup> – 10
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 35	9 <sup>th</sup> – 7
4 <sup>th</sup> – 30	10 <sup>th</sup> – 5
5 <sup>th</sup> – 25	11 <sup>th</sup> – 3
6 <sup>th</sup> – 20	12 <sup>th</sup> – 2

G. For USHJA Awards purposes, a computer ranking system tracks the money won by horse and rider, both nationally and by zone.

### III. Judging System

- A. Each class may have the option of having either one (1) or two (2) panels of judges. Each panel will consist of two (2) judges sitting together. One (1) judge on each panel must be a USEF “R” judge, the other judge on each panel may be either a USEF “R” or USEF “r” judge. Each panel will provide one (1) score for each round. See “E” for calculating the Overall Score. **Management may choose to run a standard formatted Derby with fifteen (15) or fewer entries with one USEF (R) judge.**
- B. No panel may award the same base score to any two (2) competitors in any one round unless a competitor’s score is below the cut-off score. A numerical score must be given and may be a duplicate score if it is under the cut-off.
- C. The first round shall be judged on performance, hunter pace, jumping style, quality and substance, and movement. After the judge(s) base score is given, one (1) point will be added for each high option fence jumped. The Option Bonus Score of one additional point must be awarded even if there is a refusal, rail down or loss of good jumping style at that higher height option fence, providing that the horse-and-rider combination does jump the higher height option fence. (Maximum of four points.)
- D. The second round shall be judged on performance, hunter pace, jumping style, quality and substance, movement, handiness and brilliance of pace. Handiness is defined as ground saving movement without adversely affecting performance or style. Brilliance of pace is defined as a faster pace than ordinary, without sacrificing performance or style. **Handiness is taken into account in the judges’ base score.** After the judge(s)’ base score is given, one (1) point will be added for each high option fence jumped. The Option Bonus Score of one additional point must be awarded even if there is a refusal, rail down or loss of good jumping style at that higher height option fence, providing that the horse-and-rider combination does jump the higher height option fence. (Maximum of four points.)
- E. Overall Score - The final score from each round (3’0” with 3’5” options) will be added to obtain the overall total for each horse.

#### F. Hunt and Go

Alternatively, the Hunt and Go option may be utilized in lieu of the traditional format. The Hunt and Go format will consist of two (2) phases, one (1) Classic Hunter and one (1) Handy Hunter. The phases will be jumped consecutively. All participants will complete both the Classic and the Handy portions even if penalties (rails, refusals, etc.) are incurred. Major penalties (falls, 3 refusals, off course, etc.) **will be combined from the Classic and Handy rounds and will be eliminated after one refusal in the proceeding Handy Round.**

1. Standard Hunt and Go Format

- a. The Classic Hunter Round, consisting of **five to seven (5-7) fences with two (2) high options**, shall be judged on quality, movement, jumping style, manners and way of going.
- b. After the completion of the classic round horses will pick up their pace and pass through a set of markers to begin their handy portion of the class. **Riders are not permitted to walk or pause between rounds.** The Handy Hunter Round, consisting of **five to seven (5-7) with two (2) high options**, shall be judged on quality, movement, jumping style, manners and way of going. Pace, brilliance, and a shorter track are to be rewarded. A horse/rider may not jump decorations or other obstacles in order to create a shorter track.
- c. **Two (2) judges are required to judge the class.** Each judge will be designated either the Classic Hunter Phase or the Handy Hunter Phase. Each will provide a single score for their designated phase, in addition to the Bonus points of one point per high option jump that will be added to each judging's score. The scores from each judge will be added together to determine the total score and placement.
- d. A judging assistant may be present during all phases of the competition. The duties of the judging assistant include notifying the Judges if a rail comes down and when a horse jumps the higher height option fences. The judging assistant is not required to be a licensed official and is not responsible for the scoring of the judging panels. A competition staff member may fill this role.
- e. The Option Bonus Score of one (1) additional point for each higher height option fence jumped must be awarded even if there is a refusal, rail down or loss of good jumping style at that higher height option fence, providing that the horse- and-rider combination does jump the higher height option fence.
- f. For the Hunt and Go Format it is recommended that the judge designated to the Classic Hunter phase be the tie breaker.

**IV. Tie Breaking Procedures**

- A. No judge or panel may award the same base score to any two competitors in any one round unless a competitor's score is below the cut-off score.
- B. Any ties in all rounds will be broken by the base score (before adding height bonus points) of that round.
- C. Unless the prize list states that more than twelve (12) entries are to return for the second round, only the top twelve (12) horses from the first round, after all ties are broken, are eligible to return for the second round.
- D. All ties for overall first place in the class will compete in a jump-off round. In the case of unsafe conditions preventing a jump-off from being held, the tie will be broken using the second round base score (before adding height bonus points).
- E. Ties for other than first place in the overall standings will be broken using the second round base score (before adding height bonus points).
- F. Prior to the start of the class, if two (2) judging panels are used, one (1) panel must be designated as the tie breaking panel for the first round and another panel must be designated as

the tie breaking panel for the second round. The tie breaking panel for the first round will also be designated as the tie breaking panel for the jump-off round.

**V. Schooling**

A. During the two (2) rounds of the National Hunter Derby, all horses entered must be ridden in official horse show schooling areas unless Management designates a specific schooling area for National Hunter Derby horses. Riders must wear their horse's Derby competition number while mounted. This includes horses entered simultaneously in another class, if any. Entered horses ridden or schooled elsewhere on the competition grounds or NOT wearing their Derby competition number will be eliminated from competing in the Derby and the entry fee will be forfeited.

**VI. Order of Go**

- A. The order of go must be posted a minimum of one (1) hour prior to the start of the class.
- B. In the case of multiple horses being ridden by the same rider, every effort will be made so that there will be a minimum of eight horses (if available) separating multiple rides. All horses must be ridden in the sequence that appears on the jumping order in the first round of the competition. In the second round horses will return in reverse order of their first round scores (lowest to highest). Due to multiple rides or rider conflicts, any rider may elect to move up in the order. Should a jump-off occur, horses will return in the same order in which they competed in the second round.
- C. The draw may be performed by hand or competition management may host a computer draw.

**VII. Awards Presentation**

- A. All riders in the top twelve (12) overall (or their designated representative if not available) must ride for ribbons in order to receive prize money. Although not required, a show may choose to award separate ribbons for the first round if so stated in the prize list.
- B. Judges are required to pin to 12<sup>th</sup> place (plus two reserve placings) for the purpose of awarding zone bonus points.
- C. Ribbons and prize money are required to be awarded through 12<sup>th</sup> place per the prize money breakdown provided in section X.A.
- D. Competitions may award ribbons to the highest placing junior hunter rider and highest placing amateur hunter rider in addition to the awards for the overall top twelve (12) riders if so stated in the prize list.

**VIII. Course Requirements**

- A. The course diagrams for each round must be posted a minimum of one (1) hour before the start of the first round, unless the second round is held at another time. In that case, the course for the second round must be posted a minimum of one hour prior. **Hand walking is permitted prior to the National Hunter Derby class.**
- B. Dotted lines are prohibited in both the first and second rounds of any National Hunter Derby.
- C. Jumps in ALL Rounds
  - 1. Obstacles must simulate those reminiscent of the hunt field and course must offer a variety of Classic jumps with different appearances such as: natural post and rail, stone wall, white board fence or gate, coop, aiken, hedge, oxer, brush, logs, natural foliage.
  - 2. Natural obstacles such as banks and ditches are allowed.
  - 3. A minimum of 2" difference is required for the back element of all oxers.
  - 4. Ground lines are not to exceed 18" in depth from the vertical plane of the jump. For appropriate jumps, no ground line is necessary.
  - 5. The jumpable portion of any fence must be a minimum of 8 feet on its front face

6. The top element of all jumps must be in cups except for walls with movable bricks.
  7. Flat cups may only be used for log fences and in accordance with Federation rules.
  8. Distances will not be adjusted for ponies.
  9. Fence height 3'0"
  10. **There must be four (4) high option fences set at 3'5". (*Hunt and Go format refer to Section III F.1*)** If there is a difference in difficulty between any two tracks containing height options, the higher options should include the more inviting, less difficult track.
- D. Classic Hunter Style Course (First Round)
1. A minimum of ten obstacles must be offered in the Classic Hunter Round.
  2. At least three of the following types of fences must be utilized: natural post and rail, stone wall, white board fence, riviera gate, coop, aiken, hedge, brush or logs.
  3. At least one in and out
  4. At least one bending line
  5. At least one line with an unrelated distance
  6. At least one long approach
- E. Handy Hunter Course (Second Round)
1. A minimum of eight obstacles must be offered in the Handy Hunter Round.
  2. At least three of the following types of fences must be utilized: natural post and rail, stone wall, white board fence, riviera gate, coop, aiken, hedge, brush or logs.
  3. The course should simulate riding over hunt country and must have a minimum of two handy options, such as: tight turns, different tracks, clever options for jump approaches, pen type obstacles, hand gallop a jump, trot a lowered obstacle not to exceed 2'6" in height, halt and/or back. Gimmicky options are not appropriate.
  4. Unless the prize list states that more than twelve (12) entries are to return for the second round, then only the top twelve (12) horses from the first round, after all ties are broken, are eligible to return for the second round.

## IX. Competition Requirements

- A. A National Hunter Derby may be offered at USEF Licensed Channel I (Premier or National), or Channel II (Regional) rated competitions, or competitions that have been approved for a Special Competition status.
- B. Competition Management will collect and remit to USHJA the \$35 per horse entrant fee at Channel I (Premier and National) rated competitions and competitions that have been approved for a Special Competition status, and the \$25 per horse entrant fee at Channel II (Regional) competitions.
- C. Management may choose to offer a second USHJA National Hunter Derby restricted to Juniors and Amateurs.
  1. Cross entry of horse between the two National Hunter Derbies is not permitted.
  2. The two (2) National Hunter Derbies may run concurrently or separate at the discretion of competition management.
  3. Prize money for each class must meet the minimum requirements outlined in Section X, as designated by the competition's rating.
  4. If there are twelve (12) or less entries in either class (National Hunter Derby and National Hunter Derby restricted to Juniors and Amateurs), the two classes must be combined. When combined, the prize money must be equal or greater than the highest amount offered to any one (1) class prior to combining
  5. **Once the National Hunter Derby is split Junior and Amateur riders may choice to compete in the Open Section.**
- D. When there are (40) or more entries, the class may be split into two (2) separate classes. If there are fifty (50) or more entries, the class must be split into two (2) or three (3) separate

classes. Management may determine a cutoff time for entering before splitting the National Hunter Derby. The cutoff time will be no earlier than 24 hours prior to the proposed start time of the National Hunter Derby. When the class is split, the original advertised prize money offered must be doubled, or tripled, and split in accordance to how many sections are offered

1. A two-way split will be offered as one Open section and one Restricted section for Juniors and Amateurs.
    - a. If there are fewer than twelve (12) entries in either the Open or Restricted section, then the original entry list will be split by a random draw into two equal sections.
    - b. Prize Money for a two-way split will be divided equally at 50% to each section.
  2. A three-way split will be offered as one Open section, one Junior section, and one Amateur section.
    - a. If there are fewer than twelve in any section, then a two-way split must be utilized.
    - b. Prize Money for a three-way split will be divided to each section as follows: 33% to the Open section, 33.5% to the Junior section, and 33.5% to the Amateur section.
  3. If there are fifty (50) or more entries in any section after the original split, then the section will be divided in half by a random draw and placed separately. Prize money must be divided equally at 50% to each new section. Management must adjust the entry fee according to the reduced prize money offered if the sections are split. If the sections are split but the entry fee is not reduced, then prize money must be doubled.
  4. Cross-entry of horses between the two (2) or three (3) National Hunter Derbies is not permitted.
- E. **In the event of inclement weather, competition management has the right to change the original, posted format of the class.**
- F. Competition management will remit complete results including prize money awarded and declaration forms to USHJA (**in a PDF Form**) and USEF within ten (10) days of the conclusion of the competition.
- G. The National Hunter Derby is a featured class of the horse show, and must be presented as such with regard to arena size and location, jump quality, decorations, footing and ring preparation, lighting, etc. The ring used must have spectator seating, a quality sound system, and a dedicated announcer with no other duties during the Derby.
- H. It is important for Management to make sure that the pointing and scoring system is fully understood by spectators. USHJA requests that announcers announce scores using their own style, but containing the following information in a clear manner:
1. **First Round**  
"The judges score an 84. An additional four points will be awarded for the four higher option fences that were taken, giving our entry a final score of 88 for this round."
  2. **Second Round**  
"The judges score an 82 for this round. An additional four points will be awarded for the four higher option fences that were taken, giving our entry a final score of 86 for this round." Handiness is taken into account in the judges' base score.

**X. Prize Money and Entry Fee**

A. Prize money must be paid to a minimum of 12 places as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> -30%	7 <sup>th</sup> -4%
2 <sup>nd</sup> -22%	8 <sup>th</sup> -3%
3 <sup>rd</sup> -13%	9 <sup>th</sup> -3%
4 <sup>th</sup> -8%	10 <sup>th</sup> -2%
5 <sup>th</sup> -6%	11 <sup>th</sup> -2%
6 <sup>th</sup> -5%	12 <sup>th</sup> 2%

- B. If there are twelve (12) or less entries in the class, prize money must be paid according to the breakdown in Section X.A through the last placing entry. Any remaining prize money not awarded due to less than twelve (12) entries may be split and awarded equally to all entrants that place in the class.
- C. Competitions wishing to offer additional prize money above the minimum required (including any add-back money if applicable) and pay additional placings must print the information in the prize list and notify the USHJA of the final prize money distribution. If a change in prize money and placings occurs after the prize list is printed, the competition must follow all USEF rules regarding changes to the prize list **GR 903**. The prize money awarded to each placing below 12th place must not exceed the amount awarded to 12th place.
- D. A minimum of \$2,500 prize money must be offered per class in Channel I (Premier and National) rated competitions and competitions that have been approved for a Special Competition status.
- E. A minimum of \$1,000 prize money must be offered per class in Channel II (Regional) rated competitions.
- F. Channel I and Channel II rated may offer more than the minimum prize money required.
- G. A competition may choose to offer add-back prize money in addition to the prize money offered, however, the minimum required prize money must be guaranteed. If add-back prize money will be offered, this must be stated in the prize list.
- H. If two (2) National Hunter Derbies are offered, prize money for each class must meet the minimum requirements designated by the competition's rating.
1. If two (2) National Hunter Derbies are held as a result of splitting a single National Hunter Derby with forty (40) or more entries (an Open National Hunter Derby and a National Hunter Derby restricted to Juniors and Amateurs), prize money must be doubled and allocated 50% to each derby. Payouts within each section will follow the model listed in Point A. If there is a further split, per HU160, prize money must be doubled whenever a section is divided.
- I. If one (1) National Hunter Derby is held as a result of combining two (2) classes offered, the prize money must be equal or greater than the highest amount of prize money offered to anyone (1) class prior to combining.
- J. The entry fee cannot exceed 10% of the prize money offered including the per horse entrant fee.



**XI. USHJA Contact Information**

Please contact one of the following USHJA representatives if questions arise pertaining to the USHJA National Hunter Derby that cannot be answered by the Show Steward or Management based on the class specifications provided.

David Warner - USHJA Sport Programs Coordinator (859) 217-6740

Traci Brooks- Chair of the National Hunter Derby Task Force (310) 600-1967

Britt McCormick- USHJA President (972) 467-6008

*The USHJA National Hunter Derby and the related format and specifications are the sole properties of the USHJA and may only be held, conducted or used upon the terms and conditions specified by the USHJA. USHJA reserves the right to change language in documents related to the conduct of the USHJA National Hunter Derby as necessary for the purposes of consistency and clarity.*

*Any deviations from the class specifications for the USHJA National Hunter Derby are not permitted without the express written permission from USHJA prior to the printing of the prize list.*

*For any rules not specified above, please refer to the current USEF Rule Book.*

