



The Keys to Running a Smooth Jog



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Ashley Embry, DVM, right, oversees the USHJA International Hunter Derby jog with the judges.

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As a sport horse veterinarian who divides my time primarily between Lexington, Kentucky, and Wellington, Florida, I spend quite a bit of time at different “jogs.”

The “jog,” as it’s commonly called, is basically a trot-up for soundness that allows the veterinarian and other individuals, depending on the level of the competition, to determine whether the animal presented is “fit to compete.”

The jog gives those involved a chance for visual inspection of the horse at rest and in motion. The jog is performed to ensure the horse has no obvious clinical abnormalities that would jeopardize the animal’s ability or safety to compete.

A Rood & Riddle veterinarian offers advice to help make your next jog more efficient and less stressful.

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The model I see used for most jogs is the Fédération Equestre Internationale process, where the horse is first presented and identified in hand. The handler then, on the left side of the horse, walks a short distance either to a cone or decorative object, where the handler is instructed to pick up a trot.

After trotting the length of the jog strip, the handler should bring the horse back down to a walk and make a clockwise turn around either a cone or another decorative object at the end of the strip. Once straight, the handler jogs the horse back. After completing the jog, the horse can either be accepted and allowed to continue the competition, not accepted or eliminated from the competition, or be sent to a “hold box” for further review.

In the hold box, no active flexion tests are allowed, but the veterinarian may palpate the legs and also use hoof tes-

ters over the feet.

Every jog is different. The process varies among the disciplines and levels being jogged. As a veterinarian, the words and subjectivity of “fitness to compete” work very well for the end goal.

The 22-year-old pony who is jogging for a D-2 Pony Club rally isn’t going to be held to the same standard as the horse who is about to go out and gallop the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event. And the FEI rein-ing horse pre-competition jog is a different beast than the jog for endurance horses coming off one phase that are in the vet box being assessed before heading out to the next loop.

It’s important to have a veterinarian present for all of these jogs, to be the horse’s advocate and to pick up on anything that might compromise the horse’s ability to compete.

Here are a few things that can make your jogs a more pleasant experience.

Be prepared—If you are jogging FEI, have your passport correct and up to date. Have the correct owner signa-



Martien van der Hoeven, right, wears appropriate jog attire; Liza Boyd, below, takes the clockwise turn around a decorative bush at a walk.



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ture, have your Coggins test and vaccines entered, make sure your horse identification page is correct, etc. If you really want to impress, have your passport open to the horse identification page when you present if that particular show is not scanning microchips. If you are jogging at another event and they ask for the Coggins and/or stall number, just make sure you arrive with what you're supposed to have. It allows the jog to run faster and smoother.

Know the jog course—Don't turn the wrong way! We usually make you re-jog anyway, so just do it right the first time. If

you're unsure of how to properly jog, just ask us.

Practice—If your horse is a slug and doesn't like to jog, or is the opposite and canters on top of you—practice! Jogs often have large numbers of horses in small spaces, and safety is important. Practice completing the jog with an obedient, controlled animal. If you have a stallion or horse whose behavior you're concerned about, please speak to either the veterinarian or the organizers. Often, we can jog you first or last for the safety of all involved.

Appropriate attire—This is a big one. Granted, it's different across the disciplines, but be both sensible and practical. Wear appropriate footwear. Flip-flops and high heels are traditionally not good choices. And speaking of tradition, the equestrian sport is rich in tradition. If you're jogging at the USHJA International Hunter Derby Championship, it's probably not a good idea to jog in shorts and a T-shirt or to show up in a loud jumper bridle with rhinestones. You'll most likely be sent back to the barn to change, which then delays the completion of the jog.

Do not present a really lame horse—If your horse is "abscess lame," meaning he's extremely lame and bobbing his head, you're not going to be able to hide it from us. Some handlers with questionable horses try to canter the horse the first 20 yards of the jog and then hold the horse's head as tight as possible. Be a better horseman and leave that one in the barn.

Please advise us if your horse kicks—If we have to use a hoof tester or palpate a horse's hind leg in the hold box, please let us know if your horse is sensitive and has a history of kicking out. We prefer to know more information than we might need, rather than learning the hard way!

I hope these suggestions will help you to have a more pleasurable jog experience. As a veterinarian, I want to see sound, healthy, somewhat tractable, well-presented horses attend the jog so we can send them out to compete!

Ashley Embly, DVM, graduated magna cum laude from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. After graduation, Embly completed an internship with Rood & Riddle in Lexington, Kentucky. Following her internship, she stayed on as an ambulatory associate and also served for one year as the resident veterinarian of Stonestreet Farms. In addition, Embly completed the Chi Institute's course for acupuncture. Although Embly's primary focus is sporthorses, she also has a solid background in reproduction and Thoroughbred work. ↩