



2026 USHJA NATIONAL HUNTER DERBY REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP **SPECIFICATIONS**

Changes from 2025 marked in bold italic and underlined.

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2026 USHJA NATIONAL HUNTER DERBY REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SPECIFICATIONS

*Effective for competitions starting December 1, 2025, to November 30, 2026

I. Membership and Participation Requirements

- A. To compete in a USHJA National Hunter Derby Regional Championship (Regional Championship), horses must be recorded with the USEF and registered with the USHJA prior to the start of the class.
- B. To compete in a Regional Championship, Riders, Owners and Trainers must be current active members of the USEF and USHJA prior to the start of the class.
- C. Foreign residents and horses in good standing with their National Federation are eligible to compete in a Regional Championship but will not receive USHJA National and Zone HOTY bonus points unless they comply with Roman Numerals I.A and I.B above.
- D. The same horse may not compete in the Regional Championship and the USHJA International Hunter Derby at the same competition.
- E. Riders are limited to competing no more than four (4) horses in a Regional Championship.
- F. A competition may choose to further limit the number of horses a rider may compete in the Regional Championship to three (3) horses. The competition must notify the USHJA sixty (60) days in advance of the date of the Regional Championship and print this limitation in the prize list.
- G. Horses entered in a Regional Championship may not be required to compete in any other classes at the same competition.

II. Regional Championship Policies

- A. Schooling
 - 1. All horses competing in a Regional Championship must be ridden in official horse show schooling areas during both rounds of the class. (Exception: If management designates a specific schooling area for horses competing in the Regional Championship all horses must be ridden in this designated schooling area during both rounds of the class.)
 - 2. Horses that are competing in a Regional Championship that are found being ridden or schooled in other than an official horse show schooling area, or a specific schooling area designated for the Regional Championships, will be eliminated from the class. Entry fees will be forfeited.
 - 3. Riders must wear the designated Regional Championship number of any horse competing in a Regional Championship at all times when mounted.
 - a. Regional Championship numbers must be designated a specific color, or have visible dots on standard horse show numbers, to better assist Stewards in distinguishing Regional Championship competitors.
 - b. Regional Championship numbers must also be worn by riders competing in the Regional Championship while competing in any additional classes.
 - 4. Horses that are competing in a Regional Championship that are found being ridden or schooled by a rider NOT wearing the Regional Championship number assigned to that horse will be eliminated from the class. Entry Fees will be forfeited
- B. Hand walking in the Regional Championship arena is permitted prior to the start of the class.
- C. **When appropriate, management is encouraged to allow flatting in the Regional Championship Arena.**

- D. In accordance with HU 174.14 the same horse-and-rider combination must compete in both rounds of the Regional Championship.
- E. The same horse may not be cross entered in multiple sections of the Regional Championship.
- F. Competition Management is not permitted to restrict entries in any section of a Regional Championship.
- G. Order of Go
 - 1. The order of go must be posted a minimum of three hours prior to the start of the class.
 - a. If the Regional Championship is the first class of the day the order of go must be posted the day prior to the competition.
 - b. If the order of go is required to be posted the day prior to the competition this must be done within one (1) hour of the horse show office closing
 - 2. The draw for the order of go may be performed by hand, or competition management may host a computer draw.
 - 3. All horses must be ridden in the sequence that appears on the jumping order in the first round of the competition.
 - 4. In the case of multiple rides, every effort will be made to have a minimum of eight horses (if available) separating horses in the jump order.
 - 5. In the second round horses will return in reverse order of their first round scores (lowest to highest). Any rider with multiple rides or a rider conflict may elect to move up in the order.
 - 6. Should a jump-off occur, horses will return in the same posted order in which they competed in the second round.
- H. The following meetings must be held prior to the start of the Regional Championship
 - 1. Officials Meeting-Must be attended by the Judges, Course Designer, Steward and Competition Manager to review the specifications and judging system and to walk the course.
 - 2. Riders Meeting-Competition Manager will run the meeting to answer any questions regarding the course, class specifications and the judging system. It is recommended that at least one of the Judges, the Course Designer and a Steward also attend the meeting.
- I. **Formal attire is required.**
- J. All riders placing in the top twelve (12) overall, or their designated representative, must ride for ribbons in order to receive prize money.

III. **Competition Format**

- A. The Regional Championship will be composed of two (2) rounds.
 - 1. The Classic Hunter Round
 - 2. The Handy Hunter Round
 - 3. Both rounds will be run separately.
 - 4. All horse-and rider combinations will compete in the Classic Hunter Round.
 - 5. **The top 15 horse-and-rider combinations from the Classic Hunter Round, if available and including ties for the last qualifying position, will compete in the Handy Hunter Round.**
- B. After the Handy Hunter Round, if required, a Jump Off Round will be offered to any horse-and-rider combination tied for first place for the Regional Championship Awards.

IV. **Combining of Sections**

- A. **Entry Procedures**
 - 1. **For the purposes of combining and/or dividing, entry numbers for any Regional Championship will be finalized by the closing time of the Horse Show Office the day prior to the start of the class.**
 - 2. **Adds and scratches may be accepted after entry numbers for the class have been finalized, but they will not affect the final entry numbers used to determine the combining and/or dividing of the class.**

- A. ***At the sole discretion of management, horses scratched from the class after the entry numbers have been finalized may be required to forfeit their entry fees.***
- B. The Regional Championships must be offered as three (3) separate sections.
 - 1. Regional Championship-Open Section
 - 2. Regional Championship-Restricted to Amateurs
 - 3. Regional Championship-Restricted to Juniors
- C. ***Once the entry numbers have been finalized*** at any Regional Championship, if there are fewer than twelve (12) entries in either the Amateur Section or the Junior Section, then the two sections must be combined.
- D. ***Once the entry numbers have been finalized*** at any Regional Championship, if there are fewer than twelve (12) entries in the Open section, but more than twelve (12) entries in either the Junior Section, Amateur Section, or a combined Junior and Amateur Section, then the Open Section must be run as its own section.
- E. ***Once the entry numbers have been finalized at any Regional Championship, if there are fewer than twelve (12) entries in the Open Section, the Junior Section, and the Amateur Section, then all three sections must be combined and run as one Regional Championship.***
- F. ***Refer to section X for prize money requirements when sections are combined.***

V. **Judging Requirements**

See GR 1304 for Judging restrictions

- A. Each Regional Championship has the option of having either one (1) or two (2) panels of judges.
 - 1. Each panel of judges will consist of two (2) judges sitting together.
 - 2. One judge on each panel must be a USEF “R” licensed judge.
 - 3. The second judge on each panel may be either a USEF “R” licensed judge, or a USEF “I” licensed judge.
 - 4. All judges must be in good standing with the USEF and the USHJA.
- B. No guest cards will be granted for a Regional Championship.
- C. A judging assistant *must* be present during all phases of the competition.
 - 1. The duties of the judging assistant include notifying the Judges if a rail comes down and/or when a horse jumps the higher height option fences.
 - 2. The judging assistant is not required to be a licensed official and is not responsible for the scoring of the judging panels.
 - 3. A competition staff member may fill this role.

VI. **Judging System**

- A. Judges are required to pin to 20th place (plus two reserve placings).
- B. The Classic Hunter Round will be judged on quality, movement, jumping style, manners and way of going *with pace and brilliance to be rewarded*.
 - 1. Using the open numerical judging system each judging panel will award a base score for each round.
 - 2. No judging panel may award the same base score to any two horse-and-rider combinations in any one round unless that score is below the cut-off score.
 - 3. In addition to this base score, each judging panel will award an Option Bonus Score for each round.
 - a. The Option Bonus Score will consist of one additional point for every higher height option fence jumped.
 - b. The Option Bonus Score for each higher height option fence jumped must be awarded even if there ***are two refusals***, a rail down, or loss of good jumping style at the higher height option fence ***provided the horse-and-rider combination ultimately jump the higher height option fence.***

- c. These two scores must be announced separately and then added together to determine each horse and rider combination's score for this round from each judging panel.
4. If two judging panels are used, the scores from each of the judging panels will be added together to determine the total score of each horse and rider combination for this round.
- C. The Handy Hunter Round will be judged on quality, movement, jumping style, manners and way of going *with pace, brilliance and shorter tracks to be rewarded*. A horse-and-rider combination may not jump decorations or other obstacles in order to create a shorter track.
 1. Using the open numerical judging system each judging panel will award a base score for each round.
 2. No judging panel may award the same base score to any two horse-and-rider combinations in any one round unless that score is below the cut-off score.
 3. The handiness of each Handy Hunter Round will be reflected in the base score of each judging panel.
 - a. Handiness is defined as ground saving movement without adversely affecting performance or style.
 - b. Brilliance of pace is defined as a faster pace than ordinary, without sacrificing performance or style.
 4. In addition to this base score each judging panel will award an Option Bonus Score for each round.
 - a. The Option Bonus Score will consist of one additional bonus point for every higher height option fence jumped.
 - b. The Option Bonus Score for each higher height option fence jumped must be awarded even if there are **two refusals**, a rail down or loss of good jumping style at the higher height option fence, **provided the horse-and-rider combination ultimately jumps the higher height option fence.**
 - c. These two scores must be announced separately and then added together to determine each horse-and-rider combination's score for this round from each judge or judging panel.
 5. If two judging panels are used, the scores from each of the judging panels will be added together to determine the total score of each horse and rider combination for this round.
- D. Soundness
 1. **Judges have the authority to disqualify a horse due to unsoundness at any time during the competition.**
 2. In the Regional Championship horses are required to trot a circle on a loose rein at the end of their Classic Hunter Round.
 - a. If a section is held over two days, horses are required to trot a circle on a loose rein at the end of both the Classic Hunter Round and the Handy Hunter Round.
 - b. Jogging in hand is not required at a Regional Championship.
 3. Horses may be asked to return to the ring and trot another circle at the judge's discretion.
- E. The Jump-Off Round, if required, will be judged on quality, movement, jumping style, manners and way of going *with pace, brilliance and shorter track to be rewarded*. A horse-and-rider combination may not jump decorations or other obstacles in order to create a shorter track.
 1. Each judging panel will award a base score for each round using the open numerical judging system.
 2. The handiness of each Jump Off Round will be reflected in the base score of each judging panel.
 3. No judging panel may award the same base score to any two horse-and-rider combinations.
 4. If two judging panels are used, the scores from each of the judging panels will be added together to determine the total score of each horse-and-rider combination for this round.
 5. The total score of each horse-and-rider combination will determine the final overall standings of the Regional Championships.

VII. Tie Breaking Procedure

- A. Ties in the first round will remain tied.
- B. **The top 15 horse-and-rider combinations** from the Classic Hunter Round, if available and **including ties for the last qualifying position**, will be invited back to compete in the Handy Hunter Round.
- C. After the Handy Hunter Round, all ties for first place will have the option to compete in a Jump Off Round.
 - 1. If all tied exhibitors agree NOT to jump off, the exhibitors will be named co-winners. Prize money will be added together and split evenly. Tied exhibitors will determine amongst themselves how to distribute awards that are available at the time of the competition. Duplicate Awards will be distributed at a later date.
 - 2. If there are two exhibitors that are tied, and one exhibitor declines to jump off, that exhibitor will receive second place.
 - 3. If there are more than two exhibitors that are tied and some, but not all of those exhibitors wish to jump off, a Jump Off Round will be held.
 - a. The exhibitors involved in the Jump Off Round will be placed according to their total scores from the Jump Off round.
 - b. Any exhibitors that decline to jump off will remain tied for the remaining places. Prize money will be added together and split evenly.
- D. If unsafe conditions prevent a Jump Off Round from being held, all tied exhibitors will be named co-winners. Tied exhibitors will determine amongst themselves how to distribute awards that are available at the time of the competition. Duplicate awards will be distributed at a later date.
- E. Ties for other than first place in the overall standings will remain tied. Prize Money will be added together and split evenly.

VIII. Course Requirements

- A. The course diagrams for each round must be posted a minimum of three (3) hours before the start of the first round. (Exception: If the Handy Hunter Round and/or Jump Off Round are held at least two hours after the Classic Hunter Round the courses for the Handy Hunter Round and/or Jump Off Round must be posted a minimum of three hours prior to the start of those rounds.)
- B. Copies of the course must be available for distribution.
- C. Dotted lines are prohibited in all rounds of a Regional Championship.
- D. 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. 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.
- E. Jump Cups
 - 1. The top rail of all obstacles must rest in a cup (Exception: Walls with moveable bricks).
 - 2. Flat cups may only be used in accordance with Federation rules.
 - 3. Flat cups may be used for obstacles involving logs.
- F. Distances will not be adjusted for ponies.
- G. Classic Hunter Round
 - 1. A minimum of ten obstacles must be offered in the Classic Hunter Round.
 - 2. Fences to be set at 3'0"
 - 3. There must be four (4) higher height option fences set at 3'5".
 - 4. If there is a difference in difficulty between any two tracks containing height options, the higher height options should include the more inviting, less difficult track.

5. The Classic Hunter Round must include at least two changes of direction, one in and out, one bending line, one line with an unrelated distance and one fence with a long approach.
- H. Handy Hunter Round
1. A minimum of eight obstacles must be offered in the Handy Hunter Round.
 2. Fences to be set at 3'0".
 3. There must be 4 higher height option fences set at 3'5".
 4. If there is a difference in difficulty between any two tracks containing the higher height options, the higher height options should include the more inviting, less difficult track.
 5. 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.
 6. Leading a horse over an obstacle and opening and/or closing a gate while mounted or not mounted is not permitted.
- I. Jump Off Round
1. The Jump Off Round course is a Handy Hunter Course.
 2. A minimum of eight (8) obstacles must be offered in the Jump Off Round.
 3. There will be no higher height option fences for the Jump Off Round.
 4. The course should simulate riding over hunt country and must include a minimum of two of the handy options listed above in H.5.
 5. The Jump Off Round may not replicate the Classic Hunter Round or Handy Hunter Round courses.

IX. Entry Fees

- A. The entry fee may not exceed 10% of the prize money offered.
 1. This does not include any additional prize money generated by add back fees.
 2. The entry fee must include the USHJA National Hunter Derby per horse entrant fee.
- B. An additional \$50 add back fee will be paid per horse to further supplement the prize money in their specific section.

X. Prize Money

- A. **A minimum of \$7,500 in prize money must be offered per Regional Championship.**
 1. **If the Regional Championship remains with three sections offered, then a minimum of \$2,500 in prize money must be offered in each section.**
 2. **If the Regional Championship is combined to form two sections, then a minimum of \$3,750 in prize money must be offered in each section.**
 3. **If the Regional Championship is combined to form one section, then a minimum of \$7,500 in prize money must be offered in the one section.**
- B. Regional Championships may offer more than the minimum prize money required.
- C. Competitions wishing to offer additional prize money above the minimum required and pay additional placings must print the information in the prize list and notify the USHJA of the final prize money distribution.
 1. Any add-back money to be included if applicable.
 2. 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 (See GR 903).
 3. The prize money awarded to each placing below 12th place must not exceed the amount awarded to 12th place.
- D. Prize money must be paid to a minimum of 12 places as follows:

1 st -30%	4 th -8%
2 nd -22%	5 th -6%
<u>3rd-15%</u>	6 th -5%

7th-4%
8th-3%
9th-3%

10th-2%
11th-2%
12th 1%

- E. If there are twelve (12) or fewer entries in the class, prize money must be paid according to the breakdown in Section X.D. through the last placing entry. Any remaining prize money not awarded due to fewer than twelve (12) entries must be split and awarded equally to all entrants that place in the class.

XI. Zone HOTY Points and Awards

- A. USHJA National and Zone HOTY bonus points for a Regional Championship will be awarded only if the owner is a current Active member of USEF and USHJA and the horse is recorded with the USEF and registered with the USHJA.
- B. In order for Regional Championship National and Zone HOTY points to be awarded riders must complete a USHJA Exhibitor Declaration Form prior to the conclusion of the competition.
- C. 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 & Under, Young Hunter 6 & Under, or Young Hunter 7 & Under.
- D. 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 Hunter Horse, Pony, Adult Amateur, Amateur Owner 3'3", Small Hunter or Junior Hunter 3'3, Young Hunter 5 & Under, Young Hunter 6 & Under, or Young Hunter 7 & Under.
- E. 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.
- F. At USEF licensed 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 st – 75	7 th – 23
2 nd – 60	8 th – 15
3 rd – 54	9 th – 10
4 th – 45	10 th – 7
5 th – 38	11 th – 5
6 th – 30	12 th – 3

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

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

- H. For USHJA Awards purposes, a computer ranking system tracks the money won by horse and rider, both nationally and by zone.
- I. Money won will count for National Hunter Derby standings or awards only if the rider, owner and trainer are current Active members of USEF and USHJA, and the horse is registered with USHJA.

XII. Competition Requirements

- A. *Applications to hold a Regional Championship are required and may be found on the USHJA*

website.

- B. One Regional Championship per Region per competition year will be held.
- C. A Regional Championship may be offered at USEF licensed Channel I (Premier or National), or USEF licensed Channel II (Regional) rated competitions, or competitions that have been approved for Special Competition status.
- D. Competition Management will collect and remit to USHJA the \$35 per horse entrant fee.
- E. Competition management will remit complete results including prize money awarded and declaration forms to USHJA and USEF *via PDF Form or data file* within ten (10) days of the conclusion of the competition.
- F. The Regional Championships are 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.
- G. It is important for Management to make sure that the 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 height 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 height option fences that were taken, giving our entry a final score of 86 for this round." Handiness is reflected in the judges' base score.
- H. Awards
 - 1. USHJA will supply ribbons and coolers. Competitions are responsible for all other awards. The USHJA reserves the right to supplement awards.
 - 2. The Overall Champion from each section will be presented with a cooler, ribbon and any sponsor awards if applicable.
 - 3. Ribbons will be awarded to the top twelve (12) placings for each phase, and top twenty (20) for overall placings
 - 4. Competition management may offer additional awards for the Overall Champion of each section: Owner, Rider and/or Trainer.

XIII. 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.

Kara Knott - 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.

In all sport or education related matters, where there are either discrepancies or deficiencies in the specifications, procedures or any unforeseen circumstances related to a USHJA property, the President

and Executive Director will consult with the Task Force/Committee Chair (if applicable), the Officers of the USHJA and USHJA legal counsel (if applicable) before making any final decisions.

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.

