TOP TIPS FOR THE SHOW SEASON

CASSY GADSBY, PLAITING

Cassy runs very popular plaiting clinics and has been plaiting and preparing horses for more than 20 years, starting with children’s competition ponies and moving on to the Iberian Stallions of Turville Valley Stud (home of Grand Prix dressage rider Samantha Thurman-Baker). “We had to plait the long manes of the Iberian horses most days as their hair could tangle in the reins, so it became second nature to me. The horses went to many prestigious shows such as Royal Windsor, Suffolk County and Royal Cornwall for classes and displays so had to be turned out to a very high standard.”

MAZIM ALBAYATI, IN HAND SHOWING

Mazim and his wife Susan-Jayne Hocking, breed Lusos and PREs at their Al Kingston Stud and are very successful show producers. Their Luso brood mare Xira, shown in hand by Maz, won gold medals at the 2014 and 2015 Lusitano Breed Shows, was 2014 Champion Purebred Mare and Reserve Supreme Show Champion, and a few weeks later was Reserve In Hand Lusitano Champion at the Spanish Championship Show. Her son and daughter have also been placed in hand at the Breed Show · her daughter Isis Frederica AL being judged Reserve Best British Bred Femail last year, when Maz also won the Female Youngstock Championship and a silver medal with his recently imported Janota II Do Jambujal.

JANINE PENDLEBURY LEE, RIDDEN SHOWING

Janine and her mother, Marcia Pendlebury, own Pen Llyn Lusitano Stud, which has won the Breeders Award at the Lusitano Breed Show six times in the past nine years. Janine is a prolific winner in the show ring, including the Breed Show where, in 2014, her haul included three silver medals and the Riding Horse Championship. She has won many championships and reserve championships at county shows, Iberian shows and the Spanish Championship Show, and her pupils have also achieved championship titles at major shows.

DR ANTÓNIO ANDRADE VICENTE
WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

António is an International APSL Judge, an International Working Equitation Judge and a National Dressage Judge. He has been our APSL judge at two of our Breed Shows, judging in hand and ridden pure bred Lusitano and Lusitano riding horse classes and grading mares and stallions for breeding approval. He is Professor of Animal Production and Agriculture at Escola Superior Agraria do Instituto Politecnico de Santarem and an authority on horse and pig genetics and breeding. Secretary of the Portuguese Society of Animal Genetic Resources and member of the Portuguese Working Group and Research on Equines, he was awarded a PhD by the University of Lisbon Faculty of Veterinary Medicine for his thesis ‘Characterization and selection of the Lusitano horse breed’. He shares his thoughts on the “fascinating, complex and difficult art that is the judgment of the Lusitano horse.”
PLAITING
By Cassy Gadsby

Top tips for a crest plait (and double crest). The crest plait is half a French plait running along the top of the neckline. It is used to show off the horse’s top line. The forelock is also usually plaited with a French plait starting at the poll.

1) Clean mane well, right to the root but don’t put too much conditioner on (if any) as it will make it difficult to plait.
2) If you are doing a double crest plait, split the mane down the centre with a point ended comb and feel each side to ensure you have split it evenly.
3) Dampen down the mane with some water and a brush.
4) Supreme Products “easy plait” spray is brilliant and will help you keep those plaits in place.
5) Use a stool/block to stand on, always be up higher than the neck, for best results stand towards the withers and plait towards you, this will help you keep the crest plait tight.
6) Secure your plait before you reach ‘gaps’ in mane or you may find that when your horse moves your plait loosens or falls out.
7) Band the end of plait and fold over if required.
8) You can secure with more plaiting spray if necessary.
9) Supreme Product ‘sparkle’ is a great finishing product to give that mane the finishing touch.
10) Coloured Ribbons can be applied in the style of the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art to give you the more traditional look.

Cassy threading ribbons through the plaits, London New Year’s Day Parade 2016 © Fleur Churchill

Cassy double plaits Fleur Churchill’s silver medal winning mare Estalinha Cedros at the 2014 Lusitano Breed Show

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IN HAND SHOWING
By Mazim Albayati

We’ve all been there – your young horse has been a dream in the ring and when the steward asks you to do your individual show it all goes pear-shaped, either your beloved starts spooking at the show’s speaker system or trots like it’s had a bucket of vindaloo the night before only to produce it’s best trot as you’re leaving the ring.

Like other competitive endeavours, showing in hand requires a fair amount of training and preparation, without which you’ll find yourself in awkward and possibly dangerous situations in the ring – I’m not talking about press-ups, star-jumps or 4am “Eye of The Tiger” runs - this is not “competition” in the traditional sense. The rewards of such training are significant for you and your horse and we, at the Al Kingston Stud, use in hand techniques to bond with the horse and as a complement and preparation for ridden work.

This is a brief outline of our approach to training for in hand showing – details of how to show and what to wear are covered elsewhere and having heard hours of argument about the correct colour and design, I’ve concluded there’s a large subjective element as to what’s correct and what isn’t (Tip: if you can’t breathe then it’s too tight however slimming it looks). Suffice to say that we would always respect the breed, judge, horse and ourselves by trying to turn out as smartly as possible.

Our approach is to start early and continue the training throughout as long as possible, even when the horse is at an Advanced level of riding. Early means handling your foal as soon as it’s out of the womb and exposing it to different people/places/noises/machinery and other animals (in our case a lot of dogs, geese, chickens, ducks, deer and the odd pig). One mustn’t underestimate the process of early bonding – grooming, picking out feet, walking to the paddocks are all well documented. As is the case for all future training, this is a fine balancing act between establishing trust and yet dominance for when the mature horse weighs 5 times as much as you do.

After arriving from Portugal in 2015, Janota started sessions in hand in the arena. Although she turned out to be a natural, her initial wariness at her strange surroundings were soon ironed out and she settled into a regular routine. All youngsters will keep testing your/their limits and what they can get away with and it’s important to lay down the rules early.

Janota’s first training session

Maz and 2014 Lusitano Breed Show gold medallist, Champion Mare and Reserve Supreme Champion Xira © Gemineye Photography

During in hand training in our arena we expose all our horses to a variety of music (even Sue’s music collection seems to go down well), poles, other horses being ridden and whatever we think might spook them in a show environment. We often have ridden horses in the same arena with flags and/or vara. We also find a great way of training is to tackle working equitation courses in hand (not a bad way of leading hesitant ridden horses through the course). A tractor or digger going past never does any harm to your training – better your horse sees these things for the first time at home rather than at a show. Every now and then we get a pitch invasion by the dogs, guinea fowl or chickens. There are many things you can’t prepare for – once a local county show kindly decided to provide helicopter rides near the show arena and another had their stunt motorcycle event in the neighbouring ring!

Early learning - Fandango following mum Xira, heavily in foal with Giraldo

At the heart of arena training are simple lunging techniques but I like to vary these slightly to give them more of an in-hand showing flavour by putting a lot of emphasis on straight-line work.

Show preparation starts months ahead of the show season and culminates in full dress rehearsals in the weeks running up to
You don’t want to find out in the ring that your horse spooks at your hat or likes the taste of your buttons. Having seen a few flying hats as a result of loose fitting sombreros, in one case hitting the horse on the bum and causing a bit of excitement, it’s worth making sure your hat fits snugly as you do your best impression of Usain Bolt whilst looking dignified. A strip of toilet paper in the rim does the job!

Dress rehearsal involves several horses in the ring at the same time plus a pretend judge so all hands on deck. We duplicate exactly what happens on show day except that you can hurl abuse at the judge.

Going to Portugal and Spain to see how it’s done has helped us enormously. Techniques seem to vary a lot and you discover even the most professional of handlers will have problems as their horse decides on “flight” or mounting mode. What you see there are slim young handlers but again they’ve all spent a fair amount of time building up their training and working with their horse.

Standing around all day and running up and down a soft arena isn’t fun at the best of times but you can help yourself by wearing sensible footwear. I tend to wear as comfortable boots as I can get away with – ideally with rubber soles as I find leather slips. A note about running with your horse in the ring – how is it you’re on your feet all day, can carry a large bucket of water across the paddock, sling a heavyweight winter rug over a 17hh stallion and yet running for 30yds leaves you gasping for oxygen and stumbling towards the St John’s Ambulance stand? Guess what – training. Not just running with your horse, but for example practice the timing of your run and when you strike out from the circle.

The Iberian style of a few circles in trot or canter and then smoothly transitioning into a forward free-moving trot along the arena on a long line is unique in the horse world and provides a wonderful vision for the spectator. A crucial part of this is how you leave the circle into the straight-line trot using your body language, your stick (as an extension of your body) and any interesting sounds your horse associates with that trot even if it means you sound like you’re choking on a pork scratching. Leave the circle too early and you risk slowing your horse (or even worse stopping/backing up); leave too late and your horse will think you’re asking him to complete the circle and/or could lead to less controlled and more frantic trot.

Although it’s good to use the arena rails as a “guide” for your youngster, I like to move my training to the centre of the ring as soon as possible to mirror the show environment.

Whatever happens on show day, it’s about the horse and making it a stress-free experience for them. I usually try to take my horse around their new environment prior to the entering the show ring – you never know, there may be a killer hamburger van or evil dustbin round the corner. In the ring you have to respect the judge and other competitors, whatever’s going through your mind! Be prepared for the steward to ask you to run the outside of the ring in trot again because 45 minutes of showing wasn’t quite enough. As you gasp for oxygen in your ridiculously tight trousers and several layers of other clothing (ideally suited for hot Southern European countries) your face touches the vibrant colours of the rainbow, don’t forget to smile – it’s all about the horse.
PREPARE YOUR HORSE AT HOME FOR THE SHOW RING

Desensitise your horse to the sights and sounds of a showground by showing him various items that you might find on a showground, e.g. balloons, banners, umbrellas, plastic bags, tarpaulins. Introduce him slowly and calmly with patience to each item until he is familiar with them. A group of friends can then be introduced to make noises such as clapping and talking loudly, along with some music.

For indoor shows make sure your horse is happy to go in an indoor school, perhaps hire a local one for experience.

Prepare the horse and rider to ride in a group, particularly Stallions, to ensure safety on the day. Ring Craft is very important when Stallions are sharing a space, always be aware of the proximity of other stallions or mares.

Ensure your horse can canter round an arena or field in a group, as this is when problems may arise as the horses get excited.

Practice, practice, practice your show but be prepared to change at the last minute, as the Judge may ask for something special or the arena may not be the size you expected.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR RIDDEN SHOW

In most showing and riding horse classes you will be asked to walk, trot and canter in a group on both reins before your individual show. This is when most Judges make their decisions, so it is important to catch the Judge’s eye by showing him off as best you can, extend where you can and give yourself lots of space to extend, preferably in front of the Judge. Do not get left at the back, as this restricts the Judge’s view, but don’t overtake in front of the Judge.

BREED CLASSES

For Lusitano Breed Classes an APSL judge will expect you to show on a large triangle as they do in Portugal, or a large circle. This is not the same as with your normal English showing class, you will be expected to walk, trot and canter on one rein then change the rein and do the same on the other rein. Try to include moments of extension and collection where you can and they like to see a nice free walk, this is important! You must be ready to strip your horse and stand him up in front of the Judge, therefore another pair of hands will be needed to help take the saddle and give him a tidy up.

Practise standing your horse up at home, all four legs square, head up and looking alert. The judge will inspect him, giving conformation marks. You will not be expected to run him up in hand.

RIDDEN HORSE CLASSES

These can consist of novice, intermediate, open, advanced intermediate and advanced. For Novice or Ridden Horse you would be expected to give a short basic show of walk, trot and canter on both reins in a half figure of eight style: i.e. square halt in front of the Judge and walk away in a straight line. Go into trot along the long side, change the rein across the diagonal, trot round the corner and down the long side. Pick up canter on the corner, go down the next long side around the corner and change rein across the diagonal with a direct change through trot back to canter. Canter the next corner and long side then back to trot trying to make a straight line back to the Judge. Halt square and salute.

This can be adapted for classes such intermediate and open, where it usually states movements up to elementary. Still keep it simple, but include some elementary movements such as leg yield, medium trot, counter canter, walk to canter and simple changes. Only do what your horse can do well.

The advanced intermediate includes movements up to advanced medium, such as half pass. With advanced classes include advanced movements and above such as Piaffe, Passage, tempi changes etc.

PREPARE YOURSELF MENTALLY

Your horse will pick up on any anxieties you may have, so try to keep calm and imagine you are riding at home. Do not rush and give yourself plenty of time to warm up. It is good to go to a few low key shows before you enter into the main shows.

TIPS ON TURNOUT

First of all your horse must be well groomed and looking at its best. For breed classes generally mane and tail are plaited. Dressage, showing attire or Traditional Portuguese tack and clothing is acceptable. White dressage Squares or Numnahs are usually acceptable. Check the show hat policy i.e. Top hat or Riding hat.

The most important rule is PRACTICE. Feel comfortable with your test and only do movements that you know your horse does well and you are happy with. Showing is meant to be fun and rosettes are just the icing on the cake, remember Judges are in a ‘no win’ situation, if you win you have a good judge! If you lose however, don’t be put off, there is always another day and another judge! One man’s meat is another man’s poison. Always be magnanimous and polite to your Judge. Above all enjoy the experience. Good luck.
The Lusitano has a closed studbook, which means only offspring whose sire and dam have both been graded for breeding and are registered in the breeders’ section of the studbook, can be registered as pure bred Lusitanos. As a result, there is a well defined breed standard, which judges must use as the basis of their judgment at all times, comparing the conformation and gaits of each horse to the ideal breed standard.

Generally speaking we begin the judgment by analyzing the dynamics of animals, observing horses at walk and trot for in-hand classes and also in canter on both reins for ridden classes. In this evaluation of the dynamics we cannot forget the particularities of Lusitano horse breed gaits, as described in the breed standard: ‘Agile, high stepping and forward thrusting, gentle and easy to ride’. This means that the Lusitano horse must have high knee dynamic when moved, must be elastic, with ability to quickly vary the frame and length of stride, always keeping calm and comfortable for the rider.

After evaluating the dynamics we must pay special attention to the conformation of the animals and we should observe them static, correctly halted, comparing their morphology with the ideal breed standard.

We must never forget some fundamental aspects that distinguish the Lusitano horse such as: his presence on the riding arena, force, expressiveness, arrogance and ability to hold our attention, catch our eyes! Attention should always be given to their extremities, that so well define all breeds, as is the case of the head (with all its Lusitano particularities), neck and also the legs, with correct expression and movement.

Each judge will have their personal method of organizing their judgment. In my case, and in an attempt to be as objective as possible, I usually add some columns in the sheet with the list of the animals where I take notes about the various gaits (walk, trot and canter) and a score for the general conformation and another for the general impression. To help to rank the animals I usually use decimals in the scores.

Additionally I like to write several (positive and negative) comments about the animals evaluated in case of any doubt or a draw at the final classification. This is also important if, at the end of the event, any owner or breeder of a horse entered in the competition questions me about the marks obtained. This way I can justify my decision in a clear manner.

I always like to try to explain the choices I made and that’s why I think it’s an important opportunity to make some comments with a microphone at the end of each class. If a horse’s owner wants to approach me at the end I can also, with the aid of my written comments, attempt to explain the classification, though I understand that not everyone may agree with them! But, as judges of the breed, we must take decisions in a short period of time and not be afraid to defend them!“I think that the fact of also being a dressage and working equitation judge is an advantage because I’m used to taking many notes and judging many animals in a short period of time, something that is important in these competitions of Model and Movements, which should be dynamic, educational and interesting to the general public.

Although the judge presents the rosettes to the best horses before him on the day, there is another award - a gold or silver medal - which can be given or withheld. These are highly prized. So what are the criteria?

If an animal receives a gold or silver medal it is an animal with absolute quality and class no matter where he was ranked in a class. That’s why in some classes all the top classified animals get medals, and in others no medal is awarded.
LUSITANO BREED STANDARD

TYPE: Middleweight (around 500Kgs) “Medium lined”; sub-convex profile throughout the body (with rounded outlines, the silhouette of which can be fitted into a square).

HEIGHT: Medium, to be measured at the withers with a measuring stick at the age of 6 years. Average height – Females – 1,55m (nearest conversion 15.1 h. h.); Males – 1, 60m (15.3 h. h.).

COAT: The most frequent is grey and bay.

TEMPERAMENT: Noble, generous and ardent, but always gentle and able to be long suffering.

MOVEMENTS: Agile, elevated, forward, smooth and providing a great comfort to the rider.

APTITUDE: A natural ability for concentration, with a great disposition for High School Work and courage and enthusiasm for the Gineta exercises (combat, hunting, bullfighting, work with cattle, etc.).

HEAD: Well proportioned, of medium length, narrow and dry, with the lower jaw not too pronounced and the cheek tending to be long. Slightly sub-convex profile with the forehead in advance of the bones of the eyebrows: the eyes tend to be elliptical in shape (almond shape), big and alive, expressive and confident. The ears are of medium length, fine, narrow and expressive.

NECK: Of medium length, arched with a narrow hairline; the junction between head and neck is narrow or fine; the neck is deep in the base and well inserted between the shoulders, rising up from the withers without any marked depression.

WITHERS: Well defined and long, with a smooth transition from the back to the neck. Always higher than the croup.

CHEST: Of medium size, deep and muscular.

RIBCAGE: Well developed, long and deep with the ribs obliquely arched into the joint with the column which promotes a short and full flank.

SHOULDERs: Long, oblique and well muscled.

BACK: Well defined and tending towards the horizontal making a smooth union between the withers and loins.

LOINS: Short, wide, muscular, slightly convex, well connected with the back and croup with which they form a continuous harmonious line.

CROUP: Strong and rounded, well balanced, slightly oblique, the length and width should be of identical dimension, the profile convex and harmonious with the point of hip relatively unobtrusive, giving the croup a transverse section of elliptical shape. The tail emerges from the same line of the croup, being of long, silky and abundant hair.

LEGS: The forelegs are well muscled and harmoniously inclined. The upper arm straight and muscular. The cannons slightly long and muscular. The fetlocks are dry, relatively big and with very little hair. The pasterns are relatively long and sloping. The hooves are of good constitution, well defined and proportioned without being too open: the line of the coronet is not very evident. The buttock is short and convex. The thigh is muscular and tends to be short, and is orientated in such a way that the patella or gaskin is in the same vertical line of the hip bone, or point of the hip. The leg is slightly long, positioning the hock in the same vertical line of the point of the buttock. The hocks are large, strong and dry. The legs present relatively closed angles.