



## **Guidelines for USEF “S” Judges – Young Horse Classes**

*Approved by the USEF Dressage Committee – January, 2009*

### **1. Be brief in your comments for a score below 7.2**

- This is the minimum score for qualification for the Markel/USEF Young Horse Dressage Program.
- If the score is lower than 7.2, the judge should simply state the score. Make a brief comment, do not apologize. Try to find a positive comment somewhere in your commentary.
- Be sure at the end of every performance to thank the rider for bringing their horse to the competition.

**Reason:** USEF has received too many complaints about negative comments over an open microphone. We realize that it is difficult to be positive when the performance has major flaws. Please write your detailed comments on the sheets, but **do not publicly comment on problems such as a ‘lateral’ walk over the open mike. It is fine to say “today the horse was a bit tense which created some rhythm problems” and move on. Do not apologize for a low score.**

### **2. Comment on what you see – not how to fix it**

- USEF is receiving many comments from riders that judges are doing ‘clinics’. That is not the judge’s job. Comment on what you see. Do not comment on why you felt the horse was not doing his job.

### **3. Shorten your comments to 2-3 sentences maximum per score**

- In general, judges’ comments are becoming too lengthy and losing their impact. Don’t ramble. If you cannot do this, it is better to say nothing rather than talk too much, or ask another member of the judging panel who is comfortable providing concise comments to make the announcements.

### **4. Do not criticize the rider – these tests are to evaluate the horse’s potential**

- We know that sometimes it IS the rider’s fault. Make this comment on the written sheet. But for the public comments, say only “We would like to see the horse presented with a longer neck.” Do not say, “The rider is pulling madly on the reins/too restrictive with the hands”, “The rider obviously does not understand what is expected at this level,” “The rider does not grasp the concept of the training scale”, etc.

## **5. Meet with your colleagues**

- If you are judging with another judge, or judging one of the Selection Trials or the National Championships, meet prior to the competition and discuss who will do the commentary, and work out your scoring system in advance. This will be required for the 2011 National Championships.

Our USEF Young Horse Dressage Coach, Scott Hassler, and riders feel this program is on the right track, and we are making improvements each year. Keep up the good work and thank you for your efforts!

The USEF Dressage Committee is making an effort to include Young Horse Judging Programs into Judges Forums. There are several planned for 2011. For information on these special forums please contact Eva Salomon ([esalomon@usef.org](mailto:esalomon@usef.org)) or Jeannie Putney ([jputney@usef.org](mailto:jputney@usef.org)) at USEF.