



2026 USEF Pony Hunter National Championship Specifications

The 2026 USEF Pony Hunter National Championship (“Championships”) Specifications (“Specifications”) published herein are effective September 30, 2025, unless stated otherwise. These Championship Specifications pertain to the following divisions:

- Regular Pony Hunter
- Green Pony Hunter

I. Eligibility Requirements for Participation

- a. The pony must be actively recorded in **good standing** with the United States Equestrian Federation (“USEF”) pursuant to GR1102 and GR1108 and registered in **good standing** with the United States Hunter Jumper Association (“USHJA”) at the time of qualification **and on or before the first day of the Championship through the conclusion of the Championship.**
- b. The **individual owner(s)** of record of the pony must be a **Competing** member in good standing with USEF and USHJA at the time of qualification **and on or before the first day of the Championship through the conclusion of the Championship.**
- c. **Ownership of the pony may change during the qualifying period and up to the close of entries for the Championship, so long as the new owner(s) meets the eligibility requirements.**
- d. **The rider of the pony must be a Competing member in good standing of USEF and USHJA at the time of qualification and on or before the first day of the Championship through the conclusion of the Championship.**
- e. **The rider of the pony must be a junior rider as defined in GR128 and in compliance with the age requirements outlined in HU141 to earn qualifying results and compete at the Championship. The junior rider that qualifies the pony may differ from the one that rides the pony at the Championships.**
- f. Ponies must have a valid microchip in accordance with HU104 and current USEF measurement card from the time of qualification through the Championship.
- g. **Ponies entered in the Green section must be green eligible per HU140.**

II. Qualifying Period:

- a. The qualifying period (“**Qualifying Period**”) for the USEF Pony Hunter National Championship are as follows:
 - Regular Pony Hunters: July 2, 2025 - July 1, 2026
 - **First Year Green Pony Hunters:** December 1, 2025-July 1, 2026
 - **Green Pony Hunters: July 2, 2025 – July 1, 2026**
 - **A pony that is green eligible may only compete in the Green Pony Hunter section one time at the USEF Hunter Pony Championship. If the pony competes in the Green Hunter Pony section at this competition, it must be the pony’s first time competing at the USEF Hunter Pony Championship (See HU140.6e).**

III. Qualifying Competitions:

- a. A Regular Pony Hunter qualifies by winning **one (1)** Championship or **one (1)** Reserve Championship in a Premier ("AA") or National ("A") rated Regular Pony Hunter section during the Qualifying Period. The **competition** in which they qualify must have a start date on or before the final day of the Qualifying Period.
- b. Regular ponies that are Champions in their respective sections at the previous year's Pony Finals may return without qualifying.
- c. A Green Pony Hunter qualifies by winning **one (1)** Championship or two **(2)** Reserve Championships in a Premier ("AA") or National ("A") rated Green Pony Hunter section at a competition during the Qualifying Period. A Green Pony may also qualify by winning **one (1)** Championship or two **(2)** Reserve Championships in a Premier ("AA") or National ("A") rated Regular Hunter Pony section at a competition **during the Qualifying Period**. The show in which they qualify must have a start date on or before the final day of the Qualifying Period.
 - o A pony that has qualified in the Green section and the Regular section may not compete in both. The owner **or their agent** of Green ponies must declare the section in which they will compete when completing their entry blank.

IV. Entry Restrictions

- a. The same junior rider may ride a small, medium, and large pony in the competition but not more than one pony in any section.

V. Phases

The **Championship** will be conducted in three phases: Model, Under Saddle, and Over Fences. In determining each pony's total score, the Model will count 25%, Under Saddle 25%, and Over Fences 50%. The **Championship** will consist of six pony hunter sections: small green pony, medium green pony, large green pony, small pony, medium pony, and large pony. Coaching from the rail is not permitted in any phase and may result in a score of zero.

- a. **Model.** Judged on conformation, way of moving, and soundness. In the Model, the ponies in each division will be split into groups of 12 or **fewer**. Each pony will be judged and given a score based on its performance in its group.
- b. **Under Saddle.** To be shown at the walk, trot, and canter **in both directions**. Riders may be asked for an extended trot. Ponies to stop easily and stand quietly. Light contact with pony's mouth is required. Judged on performance and soundness. Manners and suitability of a pony to rider will be emphasized. Extreme speed will be penalized.
 - i. In the Under Saddle, the ponies in each division will be split into groups of 12 or **fewer**. Each pony will be judged and given a score based on its performance in its group.
- c. **Over Fences.** To be shown over a minimum of eight fences at the required height (Note-Large Green ponies **will** jump at 2'9" and Large Regular ponies **will** jump 2'9"-3'0" in the **Championship**). Judged on performance and soundness. Manners and suitability of a pony to rider will be emphasized. Extreme speed is penalized.
 - i. Elimination will occur after **two cumulative** refusals

- ii. In the Over Fences phase, ponies will return to the ring in reverse order of the combined scores from the Model and Under Saddle Phases.
- iii. Soundness. All ponies are required to trot a circle on a loose rein at the end of each over fences performance. Ponies may be asked to return to the ring and trot another circle at the judge's discretion.

VI. Judging

- a. A total of six judges will officiate. Three judges will judge the model phase simultaneously but independently of each other and each of the three judges will give each pony a Model score. Three additional judges will judge the Under Saddle phase simultaneously but independently of each other, and each of the three judges will give every pony an Under Saddle score. Prior to the over fences phase, each pony's scores for the Model and Under Saddle phases are totaled and announced. All six judges will judge the Over Fences phase in three panels of two judges. Each panel will submit a separate score for each pony. During the Over Fences phase, the Open Numerical Scoring System is used: after a pony completes the course, each panel's score for the round is immediately shown. The total overall score for each pony is then calculated as soon as it has completed the last phase.
 - i. **Ties for the Model, Under Saddle, and Over Fences phases** will be broken based on the score of the judge that is designated as judge number one for each phase of the Championship, **any further ties to be broken by the score of the judge that is designated as judge 2, and further ties to be broken by the score of the judge that is designated as judge 3.** If a tie still exists for the overall standings, the score from the Over Fences **phase** round will break such a tie.
- b. If a pony/rider combination does not complete a phase or is eliminated from a phase, it will receive a score of "0" for the phase. The pony/rider combination may continue to compete in the remaining phases of the **Championship**. A pony with an ending score of "0" for a phase is not eligible for an award in that phase, but it is eligible for an overall award should scores warrant. A pony that does not compete in all phases is not eligible for an overall award but may continue to compete in any remaining phases.

VII. Championship Special Requirements

- a. The same junior rider is required to show an entry in all phases of the **Championship but may be different from the** rider that handled the pony in any phase of a qualifying event.
- b. If a rider is unable to continue to compete, the rider and/or trainer must request permission for a change of rider from the Show Committee. The decision of the Show Committee is final, binding and not subject to further appeal of any kind.
- c. **All ponies must be entered into the Championship prior to the deadline provided in the prize list.**
- d. **Refer to the USEF Pony Finals rules document on the Pony Finals webpage for additional Championship special requirements.**

VIII. HOTY Points:

Model and Under Saddle Phase		Over Fences Phase (all height sections)		Overall Top Twenty (all height sections)	
1st	100	1st	250	Champion	500
2nd	90	2nd	225	Reserve	300
3rd	80	3rd	200	3rd	200
4th	70	4th	175	4th	190
5th	60	5th	150	5th	180
6th	50	6th	125	6th	170
7th	40	7th	100	7th	160
8th	30	8th	75	8th	150
9th	20	9th	50	9th	140
10th	10	10th	25	10th	130
				11th	115
				12th	100
				13th	85
				14th	80
				15th	75
				16th	70
				17th	65
				18th	60
				19th	55
				20th	50

IX. **Championship Information - The 2026 USEF Pony Finals will take place from August 4-9, 2026, at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY.**

These Specifications are based on the USEF rules as presently known and understood. However, the Specifications are always subject to unforeseen, intervening circumstances, and realistically may not have accounted for every possible contingency. Changes in Specifications are subject to approval by USEF. Any change in the Specifications caused by a change in USEF rules will be distributed to the affected participants as soon as practicable. For questions concerning these Specifications, please contact the USEF Hunter Department at hunterdept@usef.org. Qualifying for these Championships will be conducted under USEF rules except as outlined otherwise herein.