

## CATOCTIN CHAPTER OF PVDA – Q & A SESSION WITH HEIDI BERRY (S)

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The Catoctin Chapter of PVDA met on Thursday, February 19, 2015, at Leslie Raulin's house. We are the proud recipients of the 2014 PVDA Award for Small Chapters and used the award check to invite a guest speaker. We invited Heidi Berry (S) to answer our show questions, which we submitted prior to the meeting.

The meeting started with chili and salad brought by Debbie Lomb and a potpourri of desserts brought by other chapter members. Almost all of the chapter members attended the meeting!

### Q & A with Heidi Berry (S)

Heidi makes diagrams that she uses while judging. She noted that some judges memorize the tests so do not use diagrams. Others use the written sheet to glance at but Heidi finds it easier to have the diagrams color coded for each gait so she can see at a glance where movements start and stop. Heidi's diagrams are from the C position since that is the most common dressage arena judge position. This is different from the diagrams that can be purchased commercially, which are from the A position as that is the perspective of the rider.

#### **Q: What are the differences between the old and new dressage tests for Training through Third Levels?**

**A:** The USEF dressage tests (Training through Fourth Levels) are updated every four years. The newest tests took effect on December 1, 2014. The tests are revised by a subcommittee of the USEF Dressage Committee, which starts its work soon after a set of tests is released. The goals for the current revisions were to (1) make the tests more progressive – allowing for a sequential development of the horse and rider, and (2) move the location of some of the movements so they are easier for the judges to evaluate. The subcommittee welcomes comments on the new tests.

Training 1: The test has more canter work than previously and the canter is developed in the first quarter of a 20m circle. This gives the rider space to correctly set up the horse for the canter; however, once the canter aids are applied, a prompt canter depart is expected. Therefore, the space to obtain the canter does not mean the horse can run through the trot into the canter; it simply gives more space to properly ask for and receive a prompt canter depart. The free walk is now a short diagonal (E to F) instead of a long diagonal through X.

Training 2: This test is the same except for the free walk. The previous free walk loop through X is now two contiguous short diagonals (F-E and E-M); the first diagonal is medium walk and the second is free walk. This gives the judge a better opportunity to evaluate the horse's walk.

Training 3: This test is unchanged from the 2011 version.

First 1: The new test has a return of the "tear" pattern at the trot. This pattern calls for a half-circle to a straight line to return back to the track. The trot lengthening on the diagonal is shorter (starting from the second letter instead of the first). The canter lengthenings are also shorter, spanning three letters on the long side instead of four letters. The shorter lengthenings are healthier for the horse's suspensory ligaments as research has associated lengthenings with suspensory ligament damage in dressage horses. There are 15m circles after both canter lengthenings, with a working canter developed in the first quarter of the circle.

First 2: The leg yields are longer in the new test (L to M and L to H instead of X to K and X to H), making the movement easier. The trot stretch circle is now in the center of the arena (starting at B instead of R), which is a better position for the movement. The trot stretch circle is after canter work instead of the free walk, so the horse is more forward thinking during the circle. As in First 1, the trot lengthenings are on a shorter diagonal. Canter lengthenings go from P-M and V-H. Down transitions may be developed slowly (albeit clearly) through the first corner on the short side.

First 3: The canter work is similar to the 2011 test except the lengthenings are shorter, spanning four letters instead of five. The trot work is very different. The trot lengthenings are a full diagonal, as in the 2011 test. The leg yields no longer have two 10m circles at X; instead, the pattern is leg yield K-X immediately followed by leg yield X-H. The 10m circles are now at R and V, with a left turn at B, halt at X, and left turn at E between them.

Second 1: This test is very different from the 2011 test. The medium trot diagonal is now a short diagonal, which is easier on the horse and the transition from medium to collected trot is on the long side instead of just before the turn into the short side. The trot shoulder-in and rein back are the same as in the 2011 test. The free walk on the diagonal is shorter. The previous three-loop canter serpentine with counter-canter at the middle loop has been moved to Second 3; instead, simple changes of lead are performed over the centerline. There are separate scores for both simple changes of lead and for the quality of the serpentine. The counter-canter is performed on the long side, spanning 3 letters. The first counter canter ends in a medium walk at M, followed by collected canter at C. The second counter canter ends with collected trot at H.

Second 2: As with previous 2015 tests, the trot lengthenings are short diagonals. The travers (haunches-in) patterns are unchanged. The half turn on the haunches are now shown between H-M near the short end at C and not right on the rail, which simplifies the movement. There is a separate score for the medium walk during the half turns on the haunches. A new trot movement is a shoulder-in to two 10m half circles to travers (haunches-in). The canter pattern has changed. The medium canter is shorter, spanning four letters instead of five. There is a “tear” pattern (K-D-E) followed by a counter-canter with a 20m half circle (E-S-R-B), then a simple change at B, followed by a repeat of the pattern in the opposite direction. This new pattern will take some concentration!

Second 3: Renvers (haunches-out) is no longer performed at Second Level (it has been moved to Third Level). Instead there is a shoulder-in to 10m circle to travers (haunches-in). The two medium trots and the two medium canters are long diagonals, as in the 2011 test. This test now has two half-turns on the haunches, for which there is a separate score for the medium walk during the movements. The canter serpentine without a change in lead, which was previously in Second 1, is now in this test. Heidi said this test flows beautifully and provides good suppling movements.

Third 1: Unchanged from the 2011 test.

Third 2: The shoulder-in to renvers (haunches-out) pattern previously in Second 3 is now in this test. The trot and canter half-passes remain in the test but at new locations. There are two flying changes instead of four. Heidi thinks the removal of the second set of flying changes is a good idea as it was difficult to get all four changes. At the canter, there are half-passes from the centerline to R or S then a flying change between R & M or S & H, instead of at a specific letter. This gives the rider space to set up the flying change, although the change must occur when the rider asks.

Third 3: The trot work is the same as the 2011 test. The flying changes used to be facing the judge between I & G; this made it easy to see if the horse was straight but it was difficult to see if the change was late behind. Now the changes are on the centerline of a diagonal between S & F and between R & K, which gives a better line of sight for the judge.

NOTE: See *USDF Connections* for a February 2015 article by Janet Foy that discusses the new USEF tests (<http://connection.epubxp.com/i/450620/24>). Also see *Dressage Today* for another February 2015 article by Janet Foy that discusses the new USEF tests (not online as of this writing).

**Q: Should a horse/rider pair ride a progression of tests?**

**A:** Not necessarily as tests can be skipped if the horse and rider are ready. You want to ensure the horse can do a higher level test before showing the lower level test. Be thinking of the higher tests as you are working on the lower tests, keeping in mind that if a horse understands the basic aids, a rider does not have to teach each new “trick” but can expect the horse to easily apply his knowledge of the aids and offer new movements without a lot of difficulty.

**Q: What are the changes in the collective marks?**

**A:** The 2011 tests had six collective marks: GAITS (x1), IMPULSION (x2), SUBMISSION (x2), RIDER’S position and seat (x1), RIDER’S correct and effective use of the aids (x1) and HARMONY between rider and horse (x1). The 2015 tests have five collective marks: GAITS (x1), IMPULSION (x2), SUBMISSION (x2), RIDER’S POSITION AND SEAT (x1) and RIDER’S CORRECT AND EFFECTIVE USE OF THE AIDS (x1). “Harmony” was removed as a separate mark and was added to the definition of SUBMISSION. The definitions of GAITS and IMPULSION remain the same. The definition of SUBMISSION has been changed to include “willing cooperation” and “harmony,” “lightness” is now “lightness of the forehand,” “acceptance of the bridle” is now “acceptance of the bit and aids,” and “straightness” has been added. Heidi said that the inclusion of “acceptance of the bit and aids” for SUBMISSION, which includes the hands, seat and leg aids, is much broader than the previous definition and a positive addition. Also, the addition of “straightness” for SUBMISSION is a major change as it encompasses the pyramid of training and it answers the frequent discussion amongst judges and riders of whether or not the horse must be straight, especially at the lower levels. Riders will now be encouraged to work on straightness from the beginning of training. RIDER’S POSITION AND SEAT is now defined as “alignment, posture, stability, weight placement, following mechanics of the gait.” The term “following mechanics of the gaits” indicates the rider moves with the horse’s gaits without hindering the gaits. For example, a rider who stiffens and bounces at the sitting trot, instead of moving with the horse, is not following the mechanics of the gait. RIDER’S CORRECT AND EFFECTIVE USE OF THE AIDS is now defined as “clarity, subtlety, independence, accuracy of test.” An example of “accuracy of test” is the proper use of the corners as the corners connect the movements to each other and require good balancing aids. Heidi feels having only two rider collective marks with more detailed subdefinitions is an improvement. The previous three marks were not always easy to score as it could be difficult to separate them from each other.

NOTE: See *USDF Connections* for a February 2015 article by Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez with Fran Severn that discusses the Rider’s Position and Seat and the Rider’s Correct and Effective Use of the Aids (<http://connection.epubxp.com/i/450620/34>).

**Q: How does a rider make the transition from Second Level to Third Level?**

**A:** First, look at the PURPOSE of each level. This is located on the top left of each test for each level. For third level, the purpose is:

PURPOSE

To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, and having begun to develop an uphill balance at Second level, now demonstrates increased engagement, especially in the extended gaits. Transitions between collected, medium and extended gaits should be well defined and performed with engagement. The horse should be reliably on the bit and show a greater degree of straightness, bending, suppleness, thoroughness, balance and self carriage than at Second Level.

Can you and your horse fulfill the purpose?

Next, look at the INTRODUCE section of the test you want to show. This is to the right of the PURPOSE on each test. This section lists the new movements introduced in that specific test. For Third Level, Test 1, this is:

INTRODUCE

Extended gaits; half pass at trot; single flying change.

Can you and your horse perform these movements at a level of proficiency for a show?

Additionally, to move to Third Level, the horse needs more strength than in Second Level. This is a commitment to ride the horse five days a week, including more than dressage – add gallop sessions, cavaletti, etc.

**Q: What is collection?**

**A:** Dressage started with war horses. The horses had to maneuver during combat. This maneuverability is attained through collection. To explain dressage terms, Heidi used the official USDF definitions, which are in

the *USDF 2015 Glossary of Judging Terms*

([http://www.usdf.org/EduDocs/Competition/2015\\_USDF\\_Glossary\\_.pdf](http://www.usdf.org/EduDocs/Competition/2015_USDF_Glossary_.pdf)). Heidi says all riders and trainers should study the Glossary of Terms. The USDF definition of collection is:

COLLECTION/COLLECTED (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

At trot and canter, a pace with shorter steps and a more uphill balance than in the working pace, with no sacrifice of impulsion. The horse's frame is shorter, with the neck stretched and arched upward. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the medium or extended pace.

At walk, a pace with shorter steps and a more uphill balance than in the medium walk, with no sacrifice of activity. The neck oscillates less than in the medium and extended paces and the frame is shorter, with the neck stretched and arched upward. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the medium or extended pace.

Note: It is a common misconception that the hind legs step further forward under the body in collection. This is not consonant with the shorter strides required in collection. In the collected paces, the hind feet are picked up relatively sooner after passing behind the hip and spend relatively more time on the ground (stance phase).

Collection is developed with exercises such as shoulder-in (gets the horse lighter and engages the inside hind leg), transitions within and between gaits and spiral in / spiral out exercises. These exercises strengthen the horse. Key to collection is engagement:

ENGAGEMENT

Increased flexion joints of the hind legs during the weight bearing (stance) phase of the stride, lowering the croup relative to the forehand, enabling the back to assist in elevating the forehand, and providing a springboard for upward thrust/impulsion. Engagement is carrying power, rather than pushing power.

At canter and piaffe, there is additional flexion at the hip joints and also greater flexion at the lumbosacral joint, which contribute to the horse's ability to lower the haunches.

Note: Engagement is not flexion of the hocks or "hock action" when the leg is swinging forward (as seen most clearly in gaited horses and hackneys), nor does it describe the forward reach of the hind leg under the horse's body.

Engagement is improved bending of the joints to give improved carrying power. The horse flexes the pelvis to load the hind end. The shoulders lighten and the horse becomes more balanced and maneuverable. To develop better collection and energy in down transitions, think about feeling passage so you help the horse develop lift, cadence and balance. As stated in the definition of collection, the tempo remains nearly the same as in medium and extended gaits.

TEMPO

Rate of repetition of the strides as may be measured by a metronome.

Tempo is measured by counting the number of times per minute that one of the hooves touches down (indicating completion of one full stride). Alternatively, at walk and trot, both emphasized beats of the stride may be counted.

Note: Tempo is often confused with rhythm, speed, pace, or cadence.

**Q: How does the rider get a better centerline and halt with a horse that wants to look around and not go toward the judge?**

**A:** This could affect your score, but not always dramatically so; it depends on the degree of resistance or disobedience. There is a difference between a horse who loses his attention a little bit (he could still get a 6 or 7) and one who refuses to proceed from the halt or gets very crooked after X. These scores could range from 2 to 4. It is important to stay on the centerline, including when proceeding from the halt at X. Do not fight the horse as this might make him more wiggly and more crooked. To improve the centerline and halt, the horse has to become more obedient to the aids. Practice a lot of centerlines but do not always halt at X. Practice halts at many places in the arena. Get the horse used to standing quietly after the halt. To do this, train the horse with a cue, perhaps something like pressure on the neck. It is necessary to train the horse to have good halts. The horse also needs to be properly prepared for a halt to get a square halt with the hindquarters under him. The key really is lots of training.

**Q: What is the definition of connection?**

**A:** Connection is the third tier of the training pyramid

([http://www.usdf.org/EduDocs/Training/RediscoveringthePyramid\\_2006\\_Sept.pdf](http://www.usdf.org/EduDocs/Training/RediscoveringthePyramid_2006_Sept.pdf)). It is a prerequisite to harmony and thoroughness. The USDF definitions of connection and related terms are:

CONNECTION/CONNECTED

State in which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for throughness.

Note: The third tier of the Pyramid of Training is represented by the word “connection” in the U.S. and by the word “contact” (translation of “*Anlehnung*”) by the FEI (see Foreign Terms and Pyramid of Training sections).

HARMONY

Used in reference to the relationship between the horse and rider, the partners’ positive physical as well as mental/emotional connection, showing rapport, trust, and confidence in one another and resulting in a sense of synchrony, contentment and unity.

THROUGHNESS/THROUGH

State in which the rider’s aids/influences go freely through to all parts of the horse, from back to front and front to back (e.g. the rein aids go through to reach and influence the hind legs). Prerequisites for this state are good connection and positive mental/emotional state.

Note: “Throughness” is a shortening of “throughlettingness,” the literal translation of the German term “*Durchlässigkeit*.” See *Pyramid of Training* section for further explanation.”

CONTACT

The reins are stretched so that they form a straight line, not a loop. “Correct contact” or “acceptance of contact” is determined by the elasticity of the connection between horse and rider.

Note: The third tier of the Pyramid of Training is represented by the word “connection” in the U.S. and by the word “contact” (translation of “*Anlehnung*”) by the FEI (see Foreign Terms section).

RESISTANCE

Active or rigid opposition to the connection or to the aids of the rider (e.g. against or above the bit). Not the same as disobedience or evasion. The horse can be resistant, yet still obedient (perform the exercise). Can be momentary or pervasive, willful or unintentional.

A connected horse stretches into the bit and does not back himself off or pull through the bit. He is on or slightly in front of the vertical, not behind the vertical. The horse can block at the back, neck, jaw and poll. When the horse is not blocked, energy keeps coming through from back to front, then recycles back. This provides a harmonious look where the horse and rider are moving together. The horse has a soft swing with a soft back and the poll is supple.

**Q: Is it ok if the horse is chewing on the bit?**

**A:** There are many aspects to determine a score for a horse that chews the bit or grinds his teeth. A lot depends on whether the horse also shows tension in other areas of his body such as stiffening his back or excessively ringing his tail. Some horses grind or chew out of habit, some out of tension and some out of evasion. The judge must decide how much the chewing or grinding affects the overall movement.

**Q: What are common mistakes that riders make that are easy to fix and frustrate judges?**

**A:**

- 1) Inaccurately ridden corners! The corners connect the movements. They should be used to balance the horse and to prepare for the next movement. Do not cut corners or show a wrong bend!!!!.
- 2) Centerlines that are not straight. Practice makes perfect!
- 3) Talking and smoozing with the judge. At a recognized/licensed show the rider should not talk to the judge. It is appropriate to tell the scribe your number as you warm up around the arena or to answer back if the judge initiates any conversation.
- 4) A horse with a tight back and a tight neck – this is really frustrating. The horse needs a swinging back.

We had a great Q & A session with Heidi and enjoyed her answers to our questions. We found her to be very knowledgeable, personable and kind. Thank you Heidi for a wonderful and informative evening!