

## Video: Gaits of the Rocky Mountain Horse

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Rocky Mountain Horses are prized for their amiable temperament, breathtaking appearance, and most of all their smooth-as-silk gaits. The Mountain Horses' gaits are popular with trail riders who spend hours in the saddle, but the breed has a highly active show circuit as well.

Rocky Mountain Horses are shown barefoot or in plain keg shoes with no pads. The judging criteria for the breed places an emphasis on the horses having a natural way of going. Below are the descriptions of the gaits as written in the United Mountain Horse Association rule book.

**Trail Walk.** The ability to transition from the highest performance level in the class to a completely relaxed walk is an important indication of the correct Mountain Horse mentality and temperament. The trail walk is an authentic four beat walk, suitable for use on the trails. The walk must be calm, relaxed, smooth and ground-covering, and ridden in every division with clearly observable slack in the reins. There is to be no sign of animation, nervousness, or the need for restraint. The head and neck should be lowered from the position that is maintained at show and pleasure gaits. The horse should stretch into the rider's hand, indicating relaxation and acceptance of the bit.

**Show Gait.** The show gait is a collected, evenly-timed four beat Mountain Horse gait performed at moderate speed, with stride and action appropriate for the division. The show walk must be collected and smooth with no exaggeration in form or execution. The sequence of the footfall is rhythmic and cadenced.

**Pleasure Gait.** The Mountain Horse Pleasure Gait is an evenly-timed, four beat gait with the greatest speed, stride, collection and action in any division. There must be a distinct difference in the speed demonstrated at the Show Gait and the Pleasure Gait, although speed must not come at the expense of form and correct footfall. The ability of the horse to demonstrate forward movement, with speed and action appropriate for the division, while remaining in correct form, is of primary importance at this gait.

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