

## Horse Show Dogs

**Teach your dog to be a respectful horse show attendee.**

*By Marcia King*

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Photo by Elizabeth Moyer

People who love horses often love dogs just as much, and horse people want to include their dogs in their equestrian lives whenever possible. If your dog is going to tag along to equestrian events, he needs to mind his manners for the safety of all involved.

If you plan to bring your dog to a horse show, you need to train him to act appropriately in crowds with many unfamiliar people, horses and other dogs. He must also feel comfortable with being confined for long periods of time.

"At show, dogs should not run loose, should not be on 'flexi' leashes that could tangle and trip others, and should not bark excessively," says Weiss.

If your dog gets overly excited when you get to the show, settle him down with exercise. "No matter how busy I am at show, I make darn sure I get my dog out for a little frolic," says Leone. "A good 10-minute run in the morning, during the day, before I go home, and before I go to bed."

Prepare your dog for shows by training him to accept confinement at home. "Regularly feed him in a crate or a separate room until he goes there on his own even when no food is available," says Yin. "Progress to confining him in the room or crate while he's eating his meal, then prolong his room or crate time by placing his food in a favorite toy so it takes longer to eat, or frequently go back to reward him with additional treats. Gradually increase the time that he's left alone."

You also want to train your dog to focus on you during exciting situations. "Teach your dog a really good 'come' when called," suggests Yin. "Every time he hears a 'come,' that means run and chase after you because he's going to get something really good when he catches up to you. I'll practice this in the house 10 or 20 times a day, and then practice the same thing 20 times on a long lead in the dog park. Once he gets the first treat, keep him focused on you by rewarding him for sitting and looking at you, and then quickly run backwards a few steps and repeat the sit at attention. Repeat this four to five times quickly so he thinks he's playing a game."

Keep in mind that dogs aren't always allowed at shows, so check the rules. Even if dogs are permitted, yours may not be keen on spending hours in an unfamiliar place among large crowds. Take his personality into consideration before you take him to a show.

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