

No Braids, No Problem

Horse show organizers allow hunt seat riders to forego mane and tail braiding in an effort to cut costs for competitors.

December 11, 2008

In recognition of the current economic climate, promoters of all the major winter horse show circuits are examining ways to help exhibitors minimize expenses. While United States Equestrian Federation rules do not mandate braiding for horses that compete in hunters and jumpers, the winter circuit managers from Gulfport, HITS, Jacksonville and the Winter Equestrian Festival have decided to go on record advising all judges that exhibitors who opt not to braid for unrated classes should not be penalized.

All the promoters agreed that, while a small step, their action may be something that makes it a little bit easier for exhibitors to continue their participation in the shows.

Don Stewart, trainer and owner of Don Stewart Stables in Ocala, Fla., and chairman of the National Junior Hunter Committee, expressed his support for the action. "I think especially in today's market, it's imperative that we cut back somewhere and perhaps this is a place to start."

Tom Struzzieri, president and CEO of HITS, Inc., says, "... we had a responsibility to look for opportunities to help exhibitors reduce some of their expenses, which is why we are coming together for this action and why we'll continue to identify areas where we can alleviate other show-related expenses."

"In talking to many, many trainers and competitors who compete annually in Jacksonville, Gulfport and Atlanta about the idea of somehow reducing the costs of showing horses, braiding seemed to be a common denominator," says Bob Bell, show manager and president of Classic Company, Ltd. "These are unprecedented times, and we must consider all aspects of the sport so that all of our exhibitors can continue showing this winter. Some of our exhibitors may have budget restraints this year, and we hope that reducing braiding costs will help them continue to compete."

Mark Bellissimo, CEO Equestrian Sport Productions, LLC, (ESP) adds, "We will be asking all of our hunter officials (judges) not to penalize any entry in the un-rated divisions of the Winter Equestrian Festival for not being braided. We consulted with a number of top trainers and judges and they all endorsed this action. It is a great opportunity to defray expenses for our exhibitors in these difficult economic times."

Save money and still get a classic hunter look by doing your own braids. This step-by-step shows you how.