

## Come Show Again

### It's the Little Things that Make a Horse Show Successful

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“Why didn't more people come to our show?”

That's often the lament of horse show managers and volunteers who spent time and money to plan and produce a show, only to have a mere trickle of trailers arrive. Sometimes the apparent boycott is simply due to a scheduling conflict: Too many shows are held on the same weekend in the same locale. Yet more often than not, it's a previous bad experience that keeps exhibitors away. If a showground doesn't offer certain amenities, then exhibitors will choose to spend their entry fees somewhere else.

Are you involved with a horse show committee? Here are a few of the little things that exhibitors expect when they compete:

1. Keep the dust down! There's already enough grit and grime involved with showing horses. The last thing everyone needs is to endure a veritable dust bowl with every class. Spectators and the judge also appreciate not being sandblasted each time a horse trots past. A sprinkler system turned on during the lunch break works wonders, but an even better choice is to hire the services of a real water truck.
2. Make it easy for exhibitors to tend to their horses. Clear the parking lot of rocks, broken glass and debris so horses can stand comfortably tied to the trailer. Have easy access to water. No one should have to trudge around in their boots hunting for water for their thirsty horse.
3. Provide some shade. Whether it's mature trees or a hastily erected awning, exhibitors and spectators appreciate a chance to get out of the sun. If the showground is bereft of covered bleachers, set some chairs beneath groups of sturdy patio umbrellas.
4. Serve decent food. While no one expects gourmet catering at a horse show, it's also not enough to offer just canned soda and bags of chips. Nor is it polite for show managers to gesture down the road toward the nearest fast food place. If a clean and reputable “taco truck” can't be recruited, then enlist the services of a horsey dad who likes to barbecue. Or make arrangements for a local deli to make optimally timed deliveries throughout the day.
5. Offer neat and tidy bathrooms. While permanent restroom facilities with running water, hand soap and paper towels may be like an oasis on the showground, anyone who's competed more than a few times is well acquainted with the traditional port-o-potty. However, there is a difference between the clean port-o-potties and the scary booths of horror. Using the restroom shouldn't be a death-defying act.

By focusing on the little things that make a horse show special, management can ensure that exhibitors will have a pleasant experience, regardless of how many blue ribbons they win. And if the horse show was considered fun and enjoyable, then they'll be sure to come back next time.