



Concordia Dressage

A GUIDE TO RULES, ASSESSMENT & RATIONALE

"Concordia" is Latin for harmony and literally means "with one heart". Concordia was also the Roman goddess of harmony.

"Dressage" is the art of riding and training horses, derived from the French word "dresser" meaning "to train".

The concept of Concordia Equestrians has been born from the desire to find the most humane and respectful way to work with, train and compete our horses.

"The horse must perform from joy, not subservience."

Klaus Balkenhol

Concordia Equestrian Events are designed to give those who want to train their horses empathetically the opportunity to compete on a level playing field where harmony, lightness and partnership are given priority over all else.

Concordia Dressage is a competition for horse/pony partnerships of any background, and is assessed on the training that is desirable for any discipline, be it jumping, hacking, western, showing or indeed modern or classical dressage.

The types of bridle, bits and bit-free tack that are allowed in the dressage competitions are reflective of the fact that the horse and rider are in a relatively safe environment and working on their flatwork and communication.



Concordia Dressage

THE RULES Including The Rationale

Rules, as for all riding club dressage competitions. But with the following additional rules applying for this class:

BRIDLE

Concordia dressage encourages riders to be empathetic to the comfort of the horse, and to listen to the horse, for this reason riders are rewarded for their horses being in the most comfortable bridle possible.

TYPE OF BRIDLE ALLOWED

Either: A simple snaffle bridle with no noseband, or a loose cavesson noseband, or Micklem bridle, or a mild bitless bridle.

BRIDLE FITTING

- Nosebands for bit or bitless bridles must not be restrictive:
- Nosebands must be correctly fitted and enable the horse to softly open it's mouth and move it's jaw.
- Pay attention to fitting of the bridle with a bit in regard sensitive tissues of the tongue, lips, bars and molars.
- For Micklem and bitless bridles care must be taken to ensure the bridle is well away from the narrow, delicate end of the nose bone.
- A correctly fitted Micklem should have absolutely no pressure on the horses head anywhere see video for details <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ7aJkVWRMo>
- Be mindful of the motor and sensory facial nerves (pressure on these nerves not only causes discomfort/pain, but also numbness of the nose and lips).
- A correctly fitting brow band must allow the horse comfort around the base of the ears and poll.
- Padding under the head-piece of the bridle is recommended to protect the poll.

Bridle fitting will be checked before the start of the test by an assessor, or his/her trained assistant. Competitors riding in nosebands that are assessed as tight will be asked to loosen the noseband, refusal of this request they will mean that they will not be allowed to compete.

A correctly fitted bridle will gain up to 20 bonus marks.

Concordia is neither pro bit nor pro bitless, we are promoting the comfort of the horse, so horses should be ridden in whatever the horse is most comfortable and happiest in.

TYPE OF BITS ALLOWED

- A simple snaffle, preferably one with a double joint and a lozenge (bits that have been designed to fit the contours of the mouth), or a Nathe or Happy Mouth.
- Bits must be as comfortable as possible for the conformation of the horses mouth, and create as little poll pressure as possible.

BITLESS

- Bitless bridle choice should be mindful.
- For Concordia it is suggested a bitless bridle is selected that offers an instant release of pressure as it can give a clear precise aids.
- NO shanked hackamores to be used
- If you wish to ride using a hackamore style bitless bridle milder hackamores such as the Flower hackamore, the Orbitless, Matrix as a hackamore and S hackamore are better options.
- Other milder bitless bridles which are preferred include: Sidepull, Enduro, Bosal, Rope Halter, Dr Cook, Easytrek, Nurtural No-Bit Bridle, Be-Kind Bridle, Micklem, Scawbrig, Light Rider, Paso Fino, Matrix (is a multi- bridle and has the following options: sidepull, paso fino, bosal, scawbrig and hackamore) etc... however be mindful that some of these bridles which have straps that tighten, dependant on design and materials used in manufacture can be slow to release pressure back to neutral; also some designs of these bridles do exert some degree of poll pressure.
- There must be no chains as any part of the bridle
- There must be no covered chains as any part of the bridle

INFORMATION LINKS FOR BITLESS BRIDLES

https://create-cdn.net/sitefiles/24/1/4/241453/Bitless_Bridles_Information_Sheet_.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNnoPrQvtsU&feature=share>

SADDLE

- Any type of correctly and comfortably fitting saddle may be used.

SPURS

- No spurs allowed.

DRESSAGE WHIP

- Riders may carry a dressage whip to encourage a light leg aid.
- Overuse of the whip will be severely penalised or may incur elimination.

THE VOICE

- The voice may be used, but should be very quiet and not a distraction to the test.

DRESS CODE FOR THE RIDER

- The dress code is relaxed in Concordia competitions, but smartness and turnout will of course add to the overall impression.
- Riders should be suitably dressed to ride in comfort and safety, and hard hats in accordance to BRC rules must be worn, as well as suitably safe footwear in the form of riding boots, jodhpur boots or western riding boots. However, everything else is up to the rider.
- Individuality is to be encouraged, and riders and horses should feel comfortable and most able to perform in what they are wearing, with safety as the highest priority.

TURNOUT OF THE HORSE

- The horse should be presented clean and well groomed and this will of course add to the overall impression. However the comfort of the horse is the highest priority.
- What is good practice in respect of horse management and turnout can be subjective, however Concordia Equestrians are encouraged to think in an enlightened way about every aspect of their horses care.



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THE ASSESMENT Including the Rationale

CHOREOGRAPHY (10 marks)

- This is a free style test (NOT to music) so the rider chooses their own choreography, which must include the compulsory movements for each level.
- COMPETITORS MUST STATE ON THE ENTRY FORM WHICH LEVEL THEY WILL BE DOING ON THE DAY OF THE COMPETITION.
- Competitors should use the whole arena (40m x 20m) and clearly and imaginatively showing each required movement.
- There is a deduction of 20 marks for any movement that is not shown, so each movement really needs to be obvious to the assessor/s!
- Timed from the entry at the letter 'A' to the halt at the end of the test.
- At PTT level 1 the test should be approximately 4 minutes long ~ if the time is over 4 ½ minutes or under 3 ½ minutes then 10 marks are deducted.
- At PTT level 2 the test should be approximately 4 ½ minutes long ~ if the time is over 5 minutes or under 4 minutes then 10 marks are deducted.
- By using a free style format each rider takes time to think about what suits their partnership best, and at preparatory levels 1 and 2 transitions are more likely to be ridden smoothly when they are not at specific markers.

COMPULSORY MOVEMENTS ~ see separate sheet

ASSESSORS

- The test is assessed (by one or two assessors) on the overall impression, the choreography, the rider, the harmony between the horse and the rider, the suppleness of the horse, the three gaits and the transitions between them.
- The assessors job is to mark and appraise the training and partnership of each combination as they see it on the day; prizes are given to those with the highest marks, but more importantly, this should be a guide to the rider of where they are on their journey with their horse at that time.

OVERALL IMPRESSION (10 marks)

- A well turned out, happy confident horse working freely, willingly and happily forward over a supple back in harmony with the rider.
- Turnout of horse and rider (see rules above).

RIDER (10 marks x 2)

Concordia equestrians seek the most comfortable way for their horses to carry them and for the most subtle and respectful way to communicate clearly to the horse their requirements.

Balance of the rider

- The rider sitting quietly, central to the horse, straight and in alignment over the legs, being able to keep in balance independent of the hands.

Lightness of the hands

- The contact between the hands and the horses head/mouth being minimal, with a steady but light and giving connection, following the movement of the head and neck, and allowing the horse to work in a naturally round outline, with the nose in front of the vertical.
- The horse should be encouraged to work in self carriage, meaning that the rider is not holding the horses head in an outline, or attempting to 'hold the horse together'.
- If the horse is worked with a light hand, over a supple back, using many transitions and progressive exercises, he will gradually carry more weight on the quarters, become lighter on the front legs and be able to achieve even the most advanced movements with ease.
- Give and retake of the reins is to show that the horse is carrying itself (self-carriage) and not being 'held together'.

Lightness of the seat

- Maintenance of a close contact with the saddle, with the weight distributed for the comfort of the horse.
- Concordia riders are aware of the conformation of the horse and that one of the weakest parts of the horses back is where he carries the back of the saddle.
- A correctly fitted and comfortable saddle are paramount, but the riders alignment and weight distribution will mightily effect the horses ease of movement.

Lightness of the leg

- The horse should respond to a light leg aid from the inside of the ankle or lower calf, then the leg should remain quietly by the horses side without gripping or kicking.
- If the horse is not moving freely forward then there will be a reason for it, and it is up to the rider to discover the reason rather than to override that reason with strong aids.

HARMONY (10 marks x 2)

This is all about the horse and rider listening to each other and being comfortable and relaxed in each others company. A truly harmonious partnership will look almost seamless, moving together with an invisible connection.

Empathy of the rider

- Listening and responding to the horse.

Receptiveness

- That is the receptiveness of the horse to the riders light aids and of the rider to the horses movements and responses.
- Subtle rewarding (positive re-enforcement) at any moment is encouraged, but should not effect the flow of the test.

Willingness

- Willingness of the horse to work forward happily, with no sign of coercion from the rider.

Relaxation and confidence

- Relaxation and confidence of both the horse and the rider both mentally and physically.

Acceptance of the bridle

- The rider being aware of the nature and conformation of the horses skull and jaw has a light and elastic contact, the contact may be just the weight of the reins.
- It is good that the horse should gently mouthe the bit, but he should not show resistance to the bridle.

SUPPLENESS (10 marks x 2)

- The horse should move freely forward and carry his rider with ease.
- The suppleness will be shown in the freedom of movement over the back and through the neck.
- The horse carrying his neck in a natural position extending it forward in a soft arch, the poll supple, the nose in front of the vertical, with the horses back clearly relaxed and showing movement over his top line.
- Suppleness will also show itself in the freedom of movement allowed in the shoulders and the length of strides, with unrestricted movement of the legs, with the horse stepping through with the hind legs carrying the weight of his body.
- The supple horse will move with straightness, the hind feet following in the tracks of the front feet, and following the line of curves equally in both directions.

THE GAITS

The gaits of the horse are judged on rhythm, correct footfalls, and the suppleness and willingness of the horse to work forward. They are not judged on the extravagance of the paces - thus making it possible for all types of breed and type of horse to be judged on a level playing field for the level of training. The following words are by Franz Mairinger, an trainer who was also an instructor at the Spanish Riding School.

If you want to know how a horse should be ridden,

see how he moves by himself when free.

How he walks, trots and canters.

Have a close look and see the beauty, the rhythm and the harmony of his movements.

Then sit down, close your eyes.

Burn this picture of effortless grace, beauty & harmony deep into your mind, your heart.

Never forget it.

Because it is the way you should ride your horse.

Walk (10 marks)

- The horse should show suppleness and a willingness to walk freely forward with purpose (i.e. he looks like he has somewhere to go without hurrying, but not just ambling along) and with a natural 4 time rhythm.
- The horse should show ground covering steps and a swinging and supple back in both the medium and the free walk, the rhythm remaining the same in both the medium and free walk and in the transitions between them.
- In the free walk the horse should be allowed to stretch his head and neck right down towards the ground, on a long or loose rein.

Trot (10 marks)

- The horse should remain in balance, and show suppleness and willingness to work freely forward in an unhurried but energetic cadenced natural 2 time rhythm.
- All trot work should be ridden in rising trot.

Canter (10 marks)

- The natural rhythm of the canter is 3 time, with a moment of suspension when all four legs are clearly off the ground.
- The horse should remain in balance, and show suppleness and a willingness to go forward without hurrying in an energetic canter that springs off the ground.

TRANSITIONS (10 marks x 2)

- Throughout the transitions the horse and rider should maintain their balance.
- The transitions should be clear, smooth and forward, with the quality of the pace maintained right up to the transition, and the quality of the new pace clear from the first steps.

The pilot Concordia Dressage Competition has been kindly sponsored by '**Physwizz' Equine Physiotherapy**, & will take place at Pioneer Equestrian Training on Sunday 23rd August 2015
www.pioneerequestriancoaching.co.uk

'A Guide to Rules, Assessment & Rational' was written for Concordia Equestrians by Milly Shand
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Keep up to date with **Concordia Equestrians** by joining on **Facebook** for news of competitions, articles, video's and updates.

If you would like to run a Concordia Dressage Competition at your Riding Club, Pony Club or Equestrian Centre, then please contact Milly.