

The School Reps Corner: How to Survive Your First I.E.L. Show

By: Elizabeth Ashforth

Showing horses is a complicated and time-consuming hobby and for many of our riders the I.E.L. shows are the only time they show their horses. This means that some of our School Reps are new to horse shows too and even more are new to the I.E.L. As School Rep Liaison of the Board of Directors of the I.E.L., I thought it would be helpful to provide some insight into how we run our shows.

It's early October, you have your paperwork in, school and rider memberships paid and now you start to look forward to the first show. Then one night, around 2am you wake up with a start and you start to think... "What if it rains? What time do I need to be there? What's this dressage stuff – and where is that show anyway?" There are two choices, fall victim to panic and kiss goodbye to the night's sleep or "***Keep Calm and Carry On***"

The Week Before The Show

- The newly developed prize list is your best friend – download it now, read it and keep a copy on hand at the show. This has all the important information regarding the show; directions, show office details, show vet, farrier, classes, dressage, entry fees, show rules etc. You name it it's here. You can find the prize list on the Show Information page on the I.E.L. website.
- Check your riders' entries (this is actually their responsibility but...). Show entries and class counts are available through www.horseshowing.com. To check an entry go to the website and click on the upcoming I.E.L. horse show (i.e. October 27th, 2013). If you have a question about anything you see up there please contact the IEL before the day of the show at showsecretary@theiel.org. Please don't wait until the day of the show!
- The stall charts will be available on the I.E.L. website before every show. Both the list and schematics will be available. Dressage ride times are also posted before each show.
- Make a file of all your show entries, dressage ride times, membership forms, and emergency contact details. We hope you never need the last item but make sure you have all your parents' cell phone numbers just in case – plus any other paperwork your school requires.
- Pack a First Aid Kit – and include sunscreen. Please don't rely on the paramedics to help with minor events; they have to be ready for true emergencies.
- In the event of rain you will receive multiple emails from the I.E.L. regarding show cancellation and what to do with your show entries in very timely manner. If you don't hear from us then the show is on, no matter what your local forecast may predict.

The Day Before the Show

- The Show Office will be open for a few hours the day before a show. This is the time when riders can pay the balance on their entries and get their number. Take advantage of this opportunity, it makes the next day less stressful.
- A few words on tents...they may not be put up while there are horses being ridden either the day before the show or the day of the show. On the day before the show you may put up a tent if your school has one but only after all horses have left the rings whether for schooling or for a show prior to the I.E.L. show. On the day of the show you may put up your tent but only before 6:30am – no exceptions and every tent must be staked or weighted down. It's often very windy at Hansen Dam; you don't want to be "that rep" retrieving your tent from the middle of the arena while the show has been stopped. Also, many schools have traditions about where they like their tents to be, but please note tent location is strictly on first come first serve basis. Tents may not be taken down until the show is over on Sunday. Finally, our shows are often around a specific Holiday but please leave the decorations at home, flapping ghosts may lend a wonderful Halloween feeling but they may also cause a major bucking fit.
- Make sure you are familiar with the ring layout at Hansen Dam. You can find schematics of the facility on the I.E.L. website under Show Information.
- Get an early night, it's a horseshow, that means a long day ☺

Show Day!

- Get there early. Even though the trainers are going to be there at "zero dark thirty" a good Team Rep is there too. I typically arrive around 5am to check on our tent and, importantly, secure a good parking space. It's a long day at the best of times; you want your vehicle to be as close to the action as possible.
- Please tell your parents that the I.E.L. doesn't run on an I.O.U. basis. All entries must be paid for before any rider receives their number. The show office can now take credit cards or payments can be made by check or in cash.
- Really important...leave all dogs at home. No dogs are allowed on show grounds during I.E.L. shows. It is the responsibility of the rider, the rider's family and the rider's trainer to inform guests of this ban. If a dog is discovered on the show grounds, the rider with whom that dog is associated will be disqualified from the show.
- Breakfast is provided by the Show Office for riders and there are always vendors on the grounds to buy food from. Most teams bring food and drinks in addition to this. Alcohol is not allowed.

Most importantly – enjoy the experience of being a School Rep. The mission of the IEL is to support and develop athletes for regional and national competition in equestrian sports; to encourage knowledge of horsemanship; to encourage teamwork in fair and friendly competition and to encourage the development of superior riding skills in young riders. We are always open to ideas and suggestions and we welcome volunteers too!

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at elizabeth.ashforth@marlboroughschool.org or drop by the Marlborough tent any time during the show – someone will know where I am!