

The REQUIRED First Inspection at the ADS North American Championships

If you are a Preliminary or Intermediate competitor for the American Driving Society North American Championships (NAC), you will be required to perform a “First Inspection” which is an activity normally reserved for Advanced/FEI drivers, so you might not be familiar with this activity. (Remember that regular Preliminary or Intermediate drivers can compete and *not* be part of the NAC, and then you would not be required to do a first inspection).

What is a First Inspection?

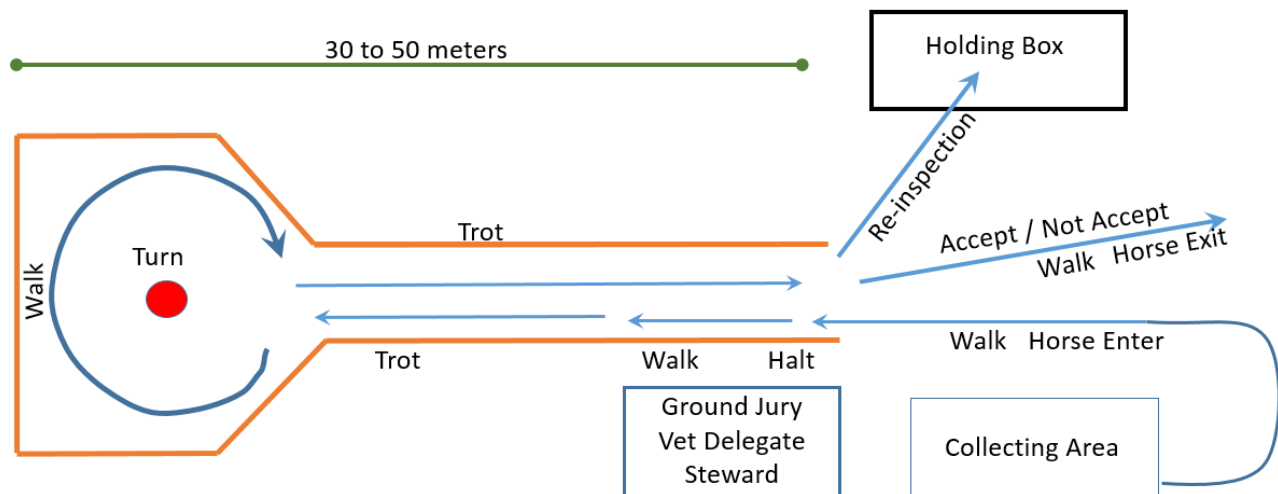
The first inspection is also called “the jog” or the “trot-up” and all of these terms may be used interchangeably. This inspection is performed before the first competition of the CDE, which is dressage. Typically, the first inspection takes place in the afternoon of the day prior to the first day of dressage.

The first inspection allows the President of the Jury and other members of the ground jury, along with a steward and veterinarian, to see if your equine is fit to compete. It is also your first impression and a chance to show off you (or a handler representative) and your equine. This first impression is extremely important!



What is the Procedure?

From the Rulebook: “The Inspection consists of an initial observation of the Horse standing still. It must then be walked in front of the Inspecting Committee, and then trotted 30 metres away from the Committee before returning towards the Committee at the trot.”



The length of the course is a minimum of 30 meters and a maximum of 50 meters and on a hard, level surface, typically asphalt. The handler should always be on the *left* side of the horse. You first approach the Ground Jury at a walk, and halt in front of them. Then you walk off and at the designated mark begin to trot. At the end of the straight part of the trot as you approach the turn, slow to a walk. Be sure to stay on the outside of the equine on the turn, and proceed in a clockwise direction around the turn at a walk. When you get to the straight part again, resume a trot all the way to the end. Remember to keep a loose lead.

How Should the Equine Be Presented?

From the Rulebook: Horses are presented on a loose rein in bridle with a bit and with ID number clearly displayed. No other tack or equipment may be worn. No rugs or blankets. No dye or paint on horses or hooves. Whips are not allowed.

Think about the following for your equine:

- You should have a bridle, bit, and reins that you can use. The bridle is expected to be open (no blinkers), but is not required to be open if you don't have one. Your equine must be shown on a loose rein, which may take practice and use of voice commands.
- Your equine must display its identification or bridle number, which is given to you in your show packet. *From the rulebook: "Horses must be issued with a letter from A to F which follows the Athlete's Identification Number. This identification must be attached to the left side of the Horse (Pairs and Fours should have them, visible, on the outside when in harness) at all times within the Showgrounds, when it is outside its stable."*
- You cannot "hide" any part of your equine, which is why no other tack, blankets, or hoof polish can be used.
- Equines are expected to be "show ready" as for dressage. Your equine should be clean, well-groomed, clipped as necessary, and manes braided.



How Should the Handler Be Presented?

From the Rulebook: "The person responsible must present the horse for inspection unless prior permission to have a substitute lead the horse has been granted by the inspection panel through the steward/organizing committee."

As the athlete/competitor, you might not be physically able to run with your equine up and down a course up to 50 meters long. You *must* be present during the inspection, but you can have a representative handler jog your equine. Let the organizer or steward know you have a substitute.

From the Rulebook: "The Athlete or his representative who presents the Horse must be smartly dressed."



What does that mean? Think "dressage outfit but comfortable/safe to run in." Gentlemen are expected to wear a coat and tie. Ladies are expected to wear a nice blouse and/or jacket. Often ladies wear skirts, and nice slacks are fine, too. Jeans, t-shirts, or athletic wear should not be worn, and shorts are not permitted. In general, dressage hats are not worn and not advised (they seem to have a habit of flying off). Baseball hats are OK if they are part of a team uniform which indicates you are representing a certain country, or you are part of a multiples turnout requiring several handlers; these hats would be matching across the presenters and show the team logo. If your grooms/navigators are presenting, it is acceptable for them to wear matching polo shirts with the team logo and jods or khakis, and then owners/athletes can match as well. Closed toe shoes should be worn, but not tennis/athletic shoes. High heels should be avoided. Open toed shoes/sandals are not permitted. Remember, this is your first

impression on the judges, make it a good one!

What Happens as a Result of the Inspection?



There are three possible outcomes of the inspection: (1) the equine is accepted to move forward with the competition, (2) the equine is *not* accepted to move forward with the competition, or (3) the equine is sent to the veterinary holding box for further examination.

If your equine is not accepted, the president of the ground jury will discuss the decision with you, but the decision is *not* open to appeal. Understandably, emotions can run high because competitors have invested significant time and effort into preparing an equine for competition, but try to remain calm and professional. Your reputation as a competitor will follow you to other events. Not being accepted is called having your horse “spun.”

If your equine is sent to the veterinary holding box, the athlete/competitor must be present to discuss the equine’s situation. The athlete/competitor is also allowed to bring their own veterinarian to the holding box. The holding box vet will perform an additional examination, usually involving more walking and trotting, along with limb palpation. The vet will discuss the results of their finding with the competitor, and the competitor then has the option to withdraw from the competition, or do another jog presentation and accept the final decision.



Final Preparation Tips

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Here are some things to think about for practice:

- Can your equine respond to verbal commands/cues to walk, trot, halt?
- Can your equine perform those commands while in an open bridle (with a bit) on a loose lead?
- How does your equine travel on an asphalt surface? Any slipping and sliding or other issues?
- Will your horse stand quietly while being inspected by the judge or vet?
- Can your equine handle judges (and the steward holding a whip) along with noisy spectators on the sidelines of the track?
- Can you (or your representative) run 100 meters without trouble (you don’t want to be huffing and puffing so hard that you can’t speak to the judge or vet at the end)
- Can you (or your representative) run in the appropriate attire? (Avoid a wardrobe malfunction by practicing in those clothes and shoes beforehand)



Best of luck to all North American Championship Competitors!!!

Authors: Dr. Erika Matulich and John H. Porter.

Sources: FEI Driving Rulebook, FEI Stewards Manual, FEI Veterinary Manual, FEI Course Designer Manual, USEF Driving Rulebook, ADS Rulebook.