



UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

USDF

Show Biz, Chapter 1. Competition Personnel

List of Typical Competition Workers/Staff

Dressage competitions require more person-power than most horse shows. (Review [USEF General Rules Subchapters GR12-A and GR12-B.](#)) Personnel required to smoothly manage a recognized competition includes, but are not limited to:

- Manager
- Secretary and assistant (if necessary)
- Treasurer
- Program and prize list editor/compiler
- Publicity/advertising chairperson
- Hospitality chair and workers as needed for care and feeding of officials, staffing a concession stand and promotion booth. One person should be assigned to host the judges and other show officials.
- Announcer
- Emergency medical person
- Grounds/Ring maintenance crew
- Farrier
- Veterinarian
- Photographer/Videographer
- Workers' Committee chairperson, in charge of: Scribes for judges, ring stewards/gatekeepers/paddock masters
- Safety Officer/coordinator.
- Parking lot attendants
- Scorers
- Runners
- Stabling coordinator
- Test/Awards presenter

How many people you ask to volunteer for each position will be dictated by the size and duration of your competition. The backbone of any competition is its workers. These people are the unsung heroes of the show. Often, many of these people serve on several committees. The competition management must treat this group with a great deal of respect because these are your future competition managers and committee chairs.

Competition management should provide workers with free drinks either in the hospitality booth or at the concession stand, invite them to the exhibitors' party at no charge or at a reduced cost, provide their lunches, and, if possible, give them a token of appreciation, i.e. a gift. This will bring them back often. The following paragraphs describe each worker and the duties attached to each assignment. As people commit to work, prepare a spreadsheet including their name, address, phone number, e-mail address, times and days available and preferred tasks if any.

Manager: The manager must be a Senior Active Member of USEF and a USDF Participating or Group Member in good standing at the time competition recognition is granted, and on the date of the competition. The duties of the manager include overseeing everything discussed in this manual, paying attention to the financial aspects, as the management is legally responsible. A manager may be an exhibitor but may not compete in his or her own competition. (See [USEF General Rules Subchapter GR1-A](#) for definitions.) The manager may ride "hors de concours" if an assistant is designated to be in charge while the manager is riding. Most aspects of managing a dressage competition can be handled by anyone capable of reading, understanding and implementing the USEF rules. Ideally, the manager will have had previous experience in organizing dressage competitions. Depending upon the level of competition, the manager may be required to have past years' experience as a manager at a USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized Dressage competition. (Refer to [USEF Rule DR. 126.3](#))

The manager should be familiar with the form that a competition must follow. Organization and composure are admirable attributes in a manager, especially on the night before the competition when one competitor is stuck with two flats ten miles from the showgrounds, the equipment chairperson suddenly realizes that R and V are missing from one set of letters and the judge is somewhere circling over the airport because of fog. The manager must be kept aware of all aspects of the competition.

Secretary and Assistant: The secretary processes entries to the competition and performs other duties as assigned by the manager. The secretary must be a Senior Active Member of the USEF and a USDF Participating or Group Member in good standing at the time competition recognition is granted, and on the date of the competition.

Depending upon the level of competition the secretary may be required to have past years' experience as a secretary at a USEF-licensed/USDF- recognized Dressage competition. (Refer to [USEF Rule DR. 126.3](#)) The competition secretary section of Show Biz will provide much more information on the responsibilities of the secretary.

The best attribute of a competition secretary is organizational skills. The secretary should be easily reached by phone and have a fairly private area where all competition materials can be left undisturbed. The assistant to the secretary should be kept informed of all competition information and be ready to take over as necessary. A friendly helpful attitude is a must. A secretary may be an exhibitor but not a competitor at his or her competition. However, he or she may show "hors de concours" if he or she designates an assistant in charge while showing.

Treasurer: The treasurer must, of course, be dependable as well as readily available. The treasurer keeps a running account of funds, pays all bills (all paid officials must receive payment before leaving showground), informs the manager of any non-negotiable checks and prepares a detailed financial report when the competition is over. Knowledge of accounting is helpful, but a calculator will do.

Prize List/ Program Editor: The editor should have knowledge of the printing and the publications process. This person will be responsible for creating the prize list and program, including positioning all the ads, information and class lists so that it all fits in the available space. The program editor must get final class schedules from the secretary as soon as they are ready and get everything to the printer so it will be available as competitors start picking up their packets.

Publicity/Advertising: The publicity/advertising chairperson must have a charming personality, good business skills, be enthusiastic and always on the lookout for money. This person heads the effort that is responsible for selling ads, gathering sponsorships and letting the world know about the wonderful competition.

Hospitality: The goal of the hospitality chairperson and hospitality workers is to make your competition the friendliest one in the country. Competitors can put up with a lot (bad weather, awkward scheduling and cranky judges) as long as there is a sympathetic listener around who will honestly try to help.

The hospitality committee is responsible for special events such as the exhibitors' party and for transporting the judges and TD. Special consideration should be given to the judges and TD. On the days of the competition, hospitality needs to make sure the judges and technical delegate are properly fed and escorted during lunch and are supplied with hot or cold drinks and snacks while judging. Non-concession food is a nice touch, if available but may not be allowed by terms of your facility agreement.

Individuals working directly with the judges should not compete before that judge.

The hospitality booth should be set up where it can be easily found. You might consider having drinks available for competitors and workers (coffee and hot chocolate in cold weather, water, lemonade and Gatorade in hot weather). Carrots, apples or horse cookies are also a nice touch. Someone should always be there to answer questions and offer information. Local maps and information on restaurants and entertainment spots should also be available.

Promotion booths can promote or sell anything. Well designed "limited edition" t-shirts and sweatshirts can be big sellers. The local dressage association may want to have a representative present to help promote membership. Make sure a careful account is kept of all items sold and monies taken (for donations, for example). If you are required by law to collect taxes, a license to do so must be obtained. Careful records must be kept and there will be specific requirements for reporting any monies collected.

There are many ways of handling food service for competitors. Except for level 1 dressage competitions, USEF requires that food be available on the showgrounds. Consult the USEF dressage levels chart to find specific food and beverage requirements for each level of dressage competition. Often, the owners of the grounds reserve the right to run concessions.

Good food at reasonable prices is always appreciated. If competition management runs the concessions, they should be able to make some money with concessions without alienating the competitors and spectators.

If the show has concessions, be sure the proper equipment is available and working, and there is staff for the stand. It may be necessary to hire a caterer or other willing group such as the Pony Club, or a 4-H group. In all instances, ascertain that the group selling the food has the appropriate licenses.

Announcer: The announcer should have a working familiarity with dressage terms, have a good speaking voice and arrive with nerves of steel as even the best sound systems can be quirky. An ability to keep the system working is a huge plus. The announcer is a valuable aid in keeping the competition on time and competitors alerted to any changes. Official competition time should be announced starting half an hour before the start of the competition and repeated frequently throughout the day. Remember to keep announcements as unobtrusive as possible so as not to disturb tests in progress.

Some additional duties of the announcer include:

- Using the class sheets, horses and riders may be announced before they enter the arena. If more than two arenas are used and depending on the location of the arenas, this might not be prudent if it appears too much noise would distract riders in near-by rings.
- Announcing winners from the class sheet given by the scorer, or off the software if linked in.

- Announcing awards ceremonies, naming class, ribbon presenter and sponsor for each class. During presentation of awards, announcing place, horse's name, rider's name, score and percentage. Pedigree and breeder information should be announced for Dressage Sport Horse Breeding (DSHB) classes.
- Thanking show sponsors.
- Advising spectators and competitors of any changes.
- Supervising and playing music for freestyles, quadrilles, etc.

The announcer(s) should arrive at the showgrounds at least the day before the competition and become thoroughly familiar with the public address equipment. If the announcer is to supply any of the equipment used, it must be agreed upon by management, put in writing item by item, and signed by both parties (contract).

NOTE: Whether the announcer, management, the facility or any other source supplies the equipment, it must be of excellent fidelity for voice and music.

Qualified Medical Personnel: Refer to [USEF General Rules Subchapter 12-C](#) for the most current rule regarding medical personnel. This person must not have any other duties at the competition. The local fire department or Red Cross may supply you with names of certified EMT/paramedics. The Red Cross will also set up first-aid stations for a nominal fee. You may be able to hire a paramedic crew with the ambulance you obtain. It may also be possible to find a qualified doctor or nurse with horse interests who would be willing to volunteer for a day. Pre-hospital trauma training endorsements are required. Doctor or nurse must have may not be a competitor or parent/owner. They must stay thru the last ride of the day including award ceremonies.

Be sure your medical personnel have the proper supplies, and find out what, if anything, the competition must provide. Also ensure that the medical personnel have the necessary names and phone numbers for real emergencies and has easy access to the phone or emergency call priority system. Give medical personnel a walkie-talkie so that they can be alerted by show staff in case of emergencies occurring anywhere on the grounds.

It is strongly advised that schooling shows have medical personnel as well.

Grounds Chairperson: The grounds chairperson works closely with the competition manager in preparing the grounds and equipment for the competition. What work the competition committee must do and what will be supplied by the owner of the grounds should be clearly outlined, preferably in writing, so everyone knows what is expected.

The grounds chairperson should provide the judges with sturdy platforms capable of accommodating up to three people and protection from the weather. A tent works well for this and should have transparent side panels in case of inclement weather. The platform should be at least 18 inches tall. Platforms should be at all locations where there will be a judge. Make sure that there are steps.

The grounds chairperson is responsible for setting up the arenas and works through the workers' committee in maintaining the arenas throughout the competition. The grounds chairperson must also see that all leased equipment is obtained (portable stalls, tents, chairs, portable toilets) and properly positioned. The final responsibility of this chairperson is clean-up supervision, ensuring that the showgrounds are left in better shape than they were before the competition.

Farrier: A farrier, whether on-call or on the grounds, is required by [USEF General Rules Subchapter 12-A](#). If the farrier is on call, make sure he/she can be reached quickly and will be close enough to the grounds to get

there when needed. Be sure you agree on what the competition will pay (if anything) and whether he/she stays on the grounds or is on call. Be sure to emphasize that, if he/she is on call, he/she must be accessible, even if that entails his/her calling the showground every hour. It is recommended that the farrier be on the grounds for a half day the day before the competition starts (haul-in day), and 30 minutes before classes commence until 30 minutes after the last ride on competition days. Post the farrier's name and number in conspicuous areas around the showground and in the program.

Veterinarian: [USEF General Rules Subchapter 12-A](#) contains requirements for the veterinarian. For dressage competitions the veterinarian may be on-call depending upon the competition. All the above statements concerning the farrier also apply to the veterinarian. A letter of agreement confirming the 'on-call' status must be obtained from the veterinarian and kept in the show files.

Photographers and Videographers: Photographers and videographers are not required personnel at your competition, but certainly add a nice touch. If you have made arrangements for their services, set aside a time to meet with them at the showground so that they can evaluate set up and lighting concerns. Make sure they understand that their presence should be unobtrusive. They should never position themselves where they block the judge's view or disturb any competitor's ride. If awards ceremonies are being conducted at the competition make sure they know when and where their presence is expected. Also make sure there is a convenient area set aside for the photographer's booth where photos can be displayed, and competitors can request their services.

Workers: The recruitment of workers begins to peak about three weeks before the competition and the responsibility to provide workers lasts through the final clean-up. A worker schedule needs to be developed and posted at the show office. If there are to be any pre-competition meetings or training sessions, those must be broadcast to the appropriate individuals. Several common worker tasks are outlined below.

- **Scorers:** Accuracy is a very important attribute of the scorer, because they must correctly add up the scores on each test, post results and keep track of special awards and/or divisions. The scorer must know USEF rules and how to use an adding machine. If you have new scorers, you may request the TD to brief them. It may be necessary to pay qualified scorers to expedite posting of scores and help ensure accuracy.

Home computers can be programmed to aid with scoring, but if a computer program is used, be sure of two "musts": There must be a computer operator with no other duties who is completely familiar with the computer itself and the program used. There must be scorers who can take over if the computer fails to operate. If you use calculators or adding machines, use the kind that print. Staple the print-out to the test sheet so the competitors have a printed copy of the scoring. Alternatively, a computer printout of the scores can be attached to the test.

Always use a fail-safe scoring system with two scorers checking each other on every test. The scorers must carefully scan every test for judged errors, since some scribes are very discrete about marking test errors.

- **Scribes:** The scribe is the competition's closest contact with the judge, so pick them carefully. Use only experienced persons for recognized competitions and do your "scribe training" at schooling competitions. Specialized experience is needed for scribing at the FEI levels and many judges prefer to have the same scribe throughout the day. Make every effort to supply scribes who can devote the whole day to the job. Do try to schedule scribes for not less than half a day. Make sure all scribes are supplied with black pens and red pens (for errors) as tests must be marked in ink, not pencil.

- **Ring Steward/Gatekeeper/Paddock Master:** A gatekeeper to open and close the entrance at A is no longer required by USEF except in certain championship competitions. However, a gatekeeper can be of great benefit to competitors as well as management. If you have one, the gatekeeper must open and close the gate for each competitor in the class. The gate should be closed during the first salute (not immediately behind the horse as it enters the arena) and opened during the final salute. The gatekeeper should move quietly to avoid startling the horse during the test. The gatekeeper should dress for weather conditions and provide their own insect repellent, sunscreen, etc. The competition management should provide chairs, which must be outside the 20-meter limit around the ring and if possible, shade of some kind.

The duties of the paddock masters and ring stewards are to monitor for safety issues, have riders ready to go in the ring on time and, if asked to do so by the TD, check equipment for adherence to rules.

The paddock master/ring steward must be equipped with a current schedule of ride times and a watch set to official time. Competition management should quickly notify the paddock master/ring steward of all changes and scratches. A walkie-talkie to the announcer is very helpful. To ensure that riders are ready, the paddock master/ring steward should know where the next three riders are and should notify all three of their impending ride times. According to the rules, a rider missing his/her ride time can be eliminated, but most dressage competitions will allow switching if problems arise. However, the judge and scribe must be notified of all changes in the order of go to ensure that the test sheets are properly identified.

- **Safety Officer:** USEF now requires all competitions appoint a safety officer or coordinator, who shall oversee the establishment and coordinator of medical and veterinary services. This person may have other roles or duties in relation to the competition with some exceptions. The safety officer should be named in the emergency plan and contact information supplied, i.e. cell phone number or state available on a walkie-talkie.
- **Parking Lot Attendants:** It may be necessary to have parking help throughout the day. Do not expect people to figure out where to go just because the competition has been running for five hours already. Lots of explicit signs can take the place of most of the attendants, but always try to have one person watching the parking areas to guide strays.
- **Runners:** A runner's main duty is to collect tests from the scribe and carry them to the scorer in a fast and unobtrusive manner. The runner may not look at these tests. A runner may be instructed to stay at their assigned work area until relieved, and should have a chair available, set up the recommended 20 meters from the competition arena. They should wear clothing suitable for the weather and comfortable shoes.

When collecting tests from the scribe, the runner should walk quietly to the judge's stand as the horse in the arena finishes the final salute and leaves the arena. The runner should not talk to either judge or scribe if they are still commenting on the preceding ride.

The scribe may ask for coffee, snacks, pens, etc. to be brought back to the judge and scribe. Do this while waiting for rides to finish. Never interrupt a judge or scribe while there is a test in progress. The chief scorer will indicate if tests are to be brought after every ride or after a certain number of rides.

- **Ring Maintenance:** This crew is responsible for monitoring the need for watering and dragging the courts and warm-up areas. They should also check to be sure nothing has blown into the ring and that no

letter or decoration has fallen over. If disaster occurs and a horse destroys a portion of the ring, this crew should have emergency plans ready to implement.

- **Stabling:** The stabling person is responsible for assigning stalls to competitors, or for providing the secretary with barn diagrams and special stabling considerations (sponsors get preferred stabling, stallion stabling, etc.), defining which stabling is considered to be preferred. Many professional show secretaries include stabling assignments as part of their services. This should be done as soon as a list of horses and stabling requests is available and must be completed before show haul-in day. The stabling person should arrive before any of the competitors to show them to their stalls and settle any conflicts. Stall cards for each stall and a chart to hang in a prominent place need to be provided so that competitors, the TD, and show management can find stalls.
- **Test Presenter/Awards Table:** The test presenter returns tests to the competitor after scoring is complete. Tests should not be released until all rides in the class are complete and scores are posted. Tests should not be viewed by any person other than the competitor and should be kept safe until the competitor claims it. The test presenter may also give out ribbons and other awards if no presentation ceremonies are being held.