

## **Pony Measurement Tips from an (almost) Technical Delegate**

Ponies are growing in popularity and are not just for youth riders anymore. While riders 12-16 are able to compete in the FEI Pony classes, there are numerous programs in which riders of all ages are able to participate with their pony-powered dance partners. Consider the National Dressage Pony Cup, which not only has a huge in-person pony and small horse championship show each year, but also has special year end awards. In order to be eligible for these pony opportunities, your pony must possess a USEF Pony Card.

### ***How do I get a pony card?***

The prize list will tell you if and when the measurement will take place at the show, and explain how to sign up. Show management will arrange for an official USEF measurement stick for dressage, which is measured in centimeters and not hands. All Level 3-5 competitions are required to have a stick on the grounds. There also needs to be a named show veterinarian who will evaluate the pony for age and soundness, as well as the USEF Technical Delegate. There is customarily a fee for the measurement at the show. If your favorite show is not offering pony measurements in the prize list, ask if they would allow it. All TDs are now able to perform measurements, and several have their own measuring sticks. Once you've found a show to have your pony measured, then the next step is to enter the show and inform show management that you would like to have your pony measured.

### ***How can I help prepare my pony?***

As you are preparing for your pony measurement day, it is essential that you practice with your pony to ensure that he will be cooperative for the process. Practice setting your pony up squarely and to stand patiently, bonus points if you are able to acquire an unofficial measurement stick so the pony is accustomed to it near their shoulders. A soundness jog is also required, so go ahead and teach your pony to trot in hand.

### ***Ok, I'm ready! What happens on show day?***

On measurement day, check with the show office to confirm the time and location for your measurement. The TD will already have selected a level paved area or concrete slab and ensured the measurement area is level. Arrive with your pony in a halter (not a bridle), wearing his show number, and there needs to be a responsible adult if you are a minor. The adult must complete the top of the pony measurement form, which will typically be picked up from show management prior to the measurement.

The TD will ask you if your pony is ready to be measured. This is important, because once the measurement begins, the measurement must be finished and the height reported to USEF. Ponies are a maximum of 148cm barefoot, or 149cm with shoes. There is no need to have your pony measured barefoot if they are normally shod.

You will be asked to jog your pony in front of the vet to verify that he is sound. If he is not sound, the measurement cannot continue. The vet will also take a look in your pony's mouth to confirm the age of the pony. A pony needs to be measured annually until they are 8 years old. Once they reach 8 or older, their measurement will become permanent.

Next, the TD will ask you to set up your pony squarely to stand for the measurement. This is where your preparation helps the TD. You may be asked to lower your pony's head to help identify the highest point of the withers, then resume a normal stance. The TD will measure your pony, ensure that the stick is level, and record the official measurement. Then, the TD will carefully record markings and distinguishing features. Hopefully, your pony does, in fact, measure as a pony and the TD will inform you of the official measurement and either allow you to take a picture of the form, or have you pick up a copy in the show office later. This can then be used for shows until your official pony card arrives.

### ***What if my pony doesn't measure?***

It is unfortunate when an owner is hopeful and expecting their animal to measure as a pony, and they measure too large. There is a process in place to request an appeal. You can find out the details of this process in the USEF Rulebook.

### ***And now you know!***

Hopefully, all of you with smaller dance partners are considering getting a pony measurement card next season, if you don't already have one. Then, you can participate in all sorts of fun classes and awards!

If you want to see a great example of a pony measurement, check out this [VIDEO](#) on YouTube to see Jean Kraus, TD 'R' performing a pony measurement.

Many thanks to Dressage4Kids for their generous scholarship (they aren't just for youth!) to help me attend the Measurement Clinic which took place at USEF Headquarters in Lexington, KY in August. This was a required educational session in my journey to become a Dressage Technical Delegate. I had a blast on my first trip to the Kentucky Horse Park and USEF Headquarters. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet other TDs (and hopeful TDs), as well as many of the USEF staff that I have been communicating with throughout this process.