

## **D-Level Certification at Portola Valley Pony Club: Guidance Notes for Candidates and Their Parents. January 2017**

We are happy to know that you are interested in testing for a Pony Club certification! Certifications provide a useful goal and a measure of what you have achieved. The world of Pony Club is, of course, much more than just tests, but achieving a certification provides a useful shorthand for instructors and organizers so they know what you have already mastered and what you are working on. Your Horse Management (HM) certification also provides you with a key to unlocking various Pony Club activities, like qualifying for Championships or applying for international exchanges.

### **1) Your Test Options**

US Pony Club now offers multiple ways to achieve certification.

- D1 is a single examination taken at one time. D1 is the same for all tracks.
- For D2 and D3 **Eventing** candidates have the option of taking the test in sections at different times:
  1. Candidates are examined in horse management, flat work, and over fences (show jumping and cross country) on the same day.
  2. Candidates may elect to be tested on horse management, flat work, and over fences separately. E.g. HM only; or HM at one test day, then flat/fences on another occasion; or HM and flat one day, and follow up with fences later.
  3. Horse management must be passed before any certificate for mounted work can be awarded.
- At the D2 and D3 level, it is also possible to take the **Hunter Seat Equitation** (HSE) track, which does not include jumping in the open (it still includes riding on the flat in the open).
  - HSE candidates are required to take all mounted sections on the same day (i.e. you cannot test for HSE HM/Flat. So for D3, your choice would be D3 HSE [the whole thing], D3 HM only, or D3 HSE Flat/Jumping [if you already passed HM]).
- Pony Club now also offers a **Dressage** track starting at D2 level. PVPC hasn't had any candidates for that yet at the D level. 😊
  
- **Horsemasters** now take exactly the same certifications as youth members.
  
- If you want to move from one track to the other, you have to move sideways from track to track before you can move vertically from level to level, e.g. you already have D2 Eventing certification and you are thinking of going for D3 HSE. You will need to take the D2 HSE Flat/Over Fences test before you can test for D3 HSE.
  
- There is no need to repeat HM if you move sideways from track to track, as it is the same for all tracks.

## 2) How to Prepare

It is vital that candidates know the Standards of Proficiency for the level at which they wish to test, including horse management knowledge and types of fences they will be asked to jump, including in the open (as appropriate).

- Go to the US Pony Club website (<http://www.ponyclub.org>) to find detailed information on Standards of Proficiency and the test sheets that your examiners will be using on the day.
- Study using your Pony Club D Level Manual. Study, study, study!
- Watch out for special horse management events hosted by Middle California region.
- Visit Pony Club IQ for educational materials from D Level all the way to H-A <http://ponyclub.thehorse.com/> (Note: this is behind the USPC website firewall, you will need to log in with your USPC website log in name and password)
- For D2 and D3, be sure to practice moving and jumping in the open as well as in an arena. (HSE candidates should also practice riding on the flat in the open – HSE candidates are sometimes surprised by this requirement, so be prepared!)
- Attend mounted lessons so you can practice discussing your ride and how you could improve it. Your discussion of your riding with the examiner is an important part of the certification. If you can't come to mounted lessons, make sure your usual trainer knows you need to practice this skill.
- Attend horse management lessons provided by the club. This is a key part of learning the required HM material. At the test, you will need to be ready to discuss your horse knowledge with the examiner. The HM lessons are the BEST way to practice this! Examiners can tell who HAS and HAS NOT been practicing!
- Think about your introductory speech. Practice saying it out loud with confidence. You will get an opportunity to practice this at the Club's HM lessons. If you don't know what is needed, come to an HM lesson and ASK!

One great way to prepare is to print out the **checklists** for the level you are going for, and bring these checklists to your HM classes and mounted lessons. Ask your instructors to go over the checklists with you. They can initial each box to confirm you can answer the question or execute the skills associated with each box. That way, you won't face any surprises on the day!

If the club is offering a "Mock D Certification" or special review session, you should try to attend. This will concentrate on horse management knowledge, and will also provide an opportunity to have your tack checked.

### For D3 candidates only.

- The D3 rating is a big step up beyond the D2 in terms of what you need to know and the independence you need to demonstrate to meet the Standards. Much less assistance is provided in the HM test than before.
- At the D3 level, you must keep a detailed Health and Maintenance Record Book for at least 3 months. Make sure you start it in time! Instruction/assistance will be given at each of the Club's HM lessons.
- You also need to practice applying polo wraps. Getting this right takes a fair bit of practice. Come to the Club's HM lessons to get instruction on "the Pony Club way" of wrapping and be sure to practice on your own too.

### 3) What to Expect on The Day

You will be greeted by the Club's D-Level test coordinator. At the moment that is Jackie Anderson. If there is an assistant, you will meet that person too. You will sign in, provide payment (if not already paid), and drop off your record book or stall card and any equipment you need for your test (e.g. grooming tools, polo wraps). Jackie will introduce the examiners and form you into groups. There will be a short explanation of the role of the Impartial Observers, and a warning to parents not to give unauthorized assistance to the candidates. Then the test will begin!

Certification tests begin with a formal inspection of tack, equipment and turn-out, and then include horse management knowledge, flat work, followed by grids/jumping and riding in the open. Stall cards are reviewed for D1 and D2 candidates, and record books are reviewed at the D3 level. **Allow a minimum of three hours for D1 and/or D2 and four hours for a D3 examination.**

Depending on the number of candidates being tested, start times may be staggered to relieve pressure on the arena provided for the examinations. For the same reason, it may be necessary for some candidates to ride before demonstrating their horse management knowledge. However, flat work will always be examined before jumping.

Each examination team comprises an examiner, a scribe/helper, and an impartial observer (IO).

- Our examiners are active, qualified members of the Pony Club or local Pony Club instructors. To be an examiner, a Pony Club member must take a standards and examination clinic, and must also be at least two certification levels above the examination level (e.g. a C2 may test candidates for D3).
- The scribe/helper is usually a Pony Club member who is offering his/her service as a volunteer to support the club. This is the beginning of learning how to be an examiner. The scribe records the examiner's observations to assist with the final completion of the test sheet and may act as ground crew for the jumping phase.
- The impartial observer is a volunteer adult who does not have a candidate testing in that group. The IO's role is to act as an intermediary between parents, candidates and the examiner, to make sure conditions are fair to all candidates, and to assist the examiner in keeping the test on schedule.

Each candidate is expected to have a chaperone (typically a parent) present at the Horse Park during the period of the examination. Chaperones do not have to stay close by to watch the test – in fact, candidates often do better without an audience! Parents can help the organizers by laying out refreshments, helping to move fences, or holding horses that might otherwise need to be tied to a trailer.

The club will provide snacks and water for candidates and volunteers. Please make sure candidates have sun screen. If your child has food allergies, please bring a snack specially for them.

Tests typically take 3-4 hours, depending on the number of candidates, the varying levels being tested, the general availability of arena space, and the competence of the candidates. At the end of the test, candidates will

have a chance to put away horses and equipment and/or have a snack while the examiners finish writing up the test sheets. Candidates are then able to review their test sheets, which are retained at the end of the day by Jackie. (You will get a copy by mail in a few days.) If the candidate has passed, he or she will receive a certificate from the examiner. Photo time! If the candidate has not met standards on a small number of sections (the number differs from level to level), the examiner will explain why, and Jackie will make sure the candidate knows the procedure for retesting those sections. All sections that have been tested must be passed before a certificate is awarded.

Important Note to Parents/Guardians/Chaperones: While the examination is taking place, parents should talk to the Impartial Observer (IO) about any concerns rather than directly with the candidates. If you have concerns of any kind, e.g. that your child has not yet been able to take a water break though the day is hot, or that you see something amiss with your child or his/her mount, please speak to the Impartial Observer (IO). The IO will take care of it, or communicate with the examiner/candidate on your behalf as appropriate.

#### **4) You and Your Mount**

Proper attire for the D certification is Pony Club Casual: PVPC polo shirt (tucked in), pony club pin, belt, breeches, tall boots (or paddock boots with half-chaps), and ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) approved helmet bearing the letters SEI (Safety Equipment Institute). Helmet should be correctly adjusted. Hair should be neatly tied back. You may wish to use a hair net. Most candidates also wear gloves. Clothes must be clean. Boots/chaps must be polished. D2 and D3 candidates will need cross country vests to ride in the open (whether Eventing or HSE candidates).

**All candidates must wear a fully completed medical arm band on their left arm or an approved medical bracelet with five lines of information (see USPC website for details). Candidates without a bracelet or arm band, or with a partially completed armband, will not be permitted to test.**

Your horse must be clean without stains or dirt. Feet must be picked out. Shoeing must be up to date. Your horse should show regular care and grooming. Manes should not be braided. Your tack must be really clean with all the stitching intact. The different certification levels have different standards of turnout to meet, and it becomes more exacting as you go up the levels. Turnout is frequently a place where candidates do not meet standard, so have an instructor or higher level pony clubber look over your tack before the exam to make sure that it meets standard!

#### **5) Where can I get more information/help?**

##### Club Officers and Instructors

- Jackie Anderson will be your first point of contact for questions about PVPC's test day - Jackie\_anderson99@yahoo.com
- Ask your Club officers for guidance on how to sign up for a certification
- Ask your riding and HM instructors whether you are ready to test. Get them to sign off your check list.

TeamSnap:

- The PVPC Member Handbook provides general information on certifications. Find it under the “Media” tab on TeamSnap.
- Sign up for a certification by marking your wish to test on the schedule in TeamSnap. Make sure to note what level you wish to test for, and on which track.

Portola Valley Pony Club website:

- The Handbook is also available at <https://portolavalley.ponyclub.org> under “Member Materials”.
- Standards of Proficiency, checklists and test sheets can be accessed via the “Members” link on the main menu of the PVPC website.

USPC website:

- For Standards of Proficiency, checklists, and test sheets, visit:  
<https://www.ponyclub.org/Certifications/LocalLevel/Certifications.aspx> (log in required)

*revised January 2017 by Michelle Cale*