

PREPARATIONS FOR SHOWING WELSH MOUNTAIN PONIES IN HAND

FEET:

By putting this topic at the top of the list, I hope to put emphasis upon what, in my opinion, is the most important and most neglected subject in production. “No foot – No horse” There is no truer dictum. Some judges do look at feet. I certainly do and am constantly appalled at the neglect and bad management of feet in most ponies.

It is most important that feet should be cared for from birth. So many defects can be improved by the skill of a good farrier in the early years of a pony’s life. How much better many ponies would stand and move if given the correct trimming and shoeing. After all, movement is not a pony throwing its legs in all directions at high speed as is often seen.

FEEDING:

After feet, more prizes are won through correct feeding (and here I include worming) than any other factor. It is, however, worse to overfeed than underfeed. Good health is a great aid to show success. Clean skins and coats full of bloom, derived from the inside, are superior to those produced by rugging and grooming.

Most ponies need to be fed extra rations in preparation for showing. These should be mainly bulky feeds. Good Welsh ponies have an extra ‘bread basket’ to deal with roughage which is their natural diet. Ponies do not need high protein concentrates. Too much of this can cause laminitis and other problems.

Ponies can live out right up to the show day. For young stock good grazing and sunshine are vital. This, and freedom, for at least part of the day, must be superior to any other method.

CONDITION:

While a show pony has naturally to be shown in first class condition, too many ponies are shown over-fat, causing them to become thick in their shoulders and lose freedom of movement. If your pony does not put on condition and look ready to show, leave it at home until such time as it does look ready. The fact that it may have some Winter coat left does not matter to me, provided that the pony is in good condition and has a healthy bloom to its coat. Many native ponies look at their charming best with a healthy Winter coat and a nice bit of feather.

RUGGING:

It is advisable to get your pony used to a rug. Rugs are essential after washing and most useful to keep your ponies clean prior to showing and to encourage them to lose their Winter coats. Rugs can never be a substitute for good feeding and a warm stable.

GROOMING AND WASHING:

Nothing beats a good strapping but enough time is not always available. Washing instead, done properly, does have good results. Firstly, only use an oil shampoo, the sort that is usually sold for cattle. These are not detergents so do not remove the grease, only the dirt. If you decide to wash, make sure the pony is thoroughly dried afterwards and remember that the pony will need to be strapped to bring back the sheen on its coat.

TRIMMING:

It is perhaps more difficult to trim a Welsh Mountain pony than a riding pony because, though you do it, the art is not to make it look obvious. Remember, manes and tails are part of their beauty. Starting with the head, trim off all the long hairs along the jaw line, but you can leave the hairs on the nose as these are feelers. Cut off the hair hanging out of the ears, but so not clean out the ears as this can make them look longer. There are some ponies that look better with nothing taken away. The mane can be too long and thick. Thin and shorten sensibly from underneath as required.

Never clip a bridle path. It is ugly and needs constant attention. Simply make a plait behind the ear as this will make a parting for the bridle and give a line to the throat.

The length of the tail depends on the pony's natural tail carriage. A very long tail must be thinned at the base of the dock to lighten it and the straggly hairs on either side of the top can be pulled to give a better line to the quarters.

The feather on the legs must be left. It is a pity ponies lose so much of this in the Summer. A little of the hair at the back of the heel and round the coronet can be trimmed to give a better line to the pastern and to show more of the hoof.

HARNESS:

All show harness should be designed to show off the pony to its best advantage. It is as important as a new hat to the owner. Whether it be a bridle, head-collar or a web halter, it should be immaculately maintained.

Stallion bridles are made with double brass buckles and brass browbands, fitted with a horseshoe straight mouth bit, whereas a mare's bridle should have a single brass buckle, stitched leather brow band and straight mouth bit with

small rings. Never show a mare with a horse shoe bit. The leather must be narrow and finely stitched.

There are some ponies that look better in the rather less expensive white web halters, as they can be most effective. Other types can be made up in white webbing of various widths. The answer is to try these on before the show and find out which suits each particular pony. All important is to have the headgear fitting correctly, particularly the nose band.

Last but not least, the all-important item that seems to be forgotten by so many is your own dress. Surely after all you have gone through with your pony, it is not much trouble to look clean and tidy yourself.

DAVID REYNOLDS 1980

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Readers of the earlier journals will recall that Nell Pennell scoured the United Kingdom for Black Welsh Mountain ponies for Myburgh Streicher of the Bukkenburg Stud. He was eventually able to form a Team of Eight which he dedicated to the memory of Nell Pennell of the Bwlch Stud.



A different view of the Team of Eight Black Welsh Mountain ponies practising on the road outside the farm Diepkloof, the home of the Bukkenburg Stud, in the Albertinia district