

# Australasian Gypsy Horse Society

## Gypsy Cob

# Judges Guide

Judging is not absolute.  
It is exactly what it says it is:  
A matter of Judgement.



The Australasian Gypsy Horse Society have published this Judges Guide to offer judges, agricultural societies and show committees an in depth guide and advice to the "Traditional Gypsy cob"

This guide has been endorsed by James Taylor of Brackenhill Stable UK and includes:

- ❖ Gypsy Horse breed standard
- ❖ Gypsy Horse History
- ❖ Expectations of judging the Gypsy horse
- ❖ Presentation standard for exhibits
- ❖ Presentation standard for handlers
- ❖ Dress code for handlers and riders

## THE CLASS

An "In hand" class is defined as a class where the horse is judged based upon its conformation. Conformation is defined as the physical appearance of an animal due to the arrangement of muscle, bone and other body tissue.

## THE IDEAL GYPSY HORSE

There is no perfectly conformed horse except in the eye of the artist. However, the Australasian Gypsy Horse Society has accepted the following "look" or image as its "ideal" from which to establish an in hand horse judging criteria.

The ideal Gypsy Cob Horse shown in hand is a horse that possesses the following characteristics: Eye appeal that is the result of a harmonious blending of an attractive head; well-proportioned neck; sloping shoulder; deep heart girth; short back; strong loin and coupling; and straight and structurally correct feet and legs that are free of defects.

A Gypsy cob should be above all else a strong and willing partner, loyal and eager to please and display a very intelligent character. They should be manageable and mannerly, respectful, alert confident and even courageous.

## PURPOSE OF THE CLASS

The purpose of the class is to preserve the Traditional Gypsy Cob type by selecting individuals in the order of their resemblance to the breed standard and that are the most positive combination of balance, structural correctness, breed, sex characteristics, and muscling.

Type is defined as an overall body type and conformation that is unique to a specific breed

## **Australasian Gypsy Horse Society — Gypsy Cob breed standard**

The Traditional Gypsy Horse will have heavy, flat bone. His body must be comparatively short. He will have a thick neck and a sloping shoulder, which should tie in well down his back. He should have a wide and powerful chest. His hindquarters should be round and large. He should sport a very thick mane and tail. His feet should be covered with a profuse amount of long hair or feather. This should start behind the knee or hock and fall to the ground and be on both the front and back of the leg. Feather can be noted as curly, woolly or straight and silky within the breed. Many prefer straight, silky feather but it is not usually demanded. What is demanded is that there is 'profuse Feather' which covers the hoof.

### **Size: The Gypsy will**

- ❖ Be of any size and may be of the pony, cob or horse variety.
- ❖ Generally between 13 and 15.2 hands but heights either side of this are equally acceptable.

### **General Appearance: The overall appearance of a Gypsy Cob should**

- ❖ Give an impression of intelligence, kindness, strength and soundness.
- ❖ Be of good bone, either medium or heavy weight.
- ❖ Be well muscled, with a sturdy compact body, and abundant mane, tail and feather.

### **Head: The Head should**

- ❖ Be neat, noble and expressive; a sweet head, meaning without coarseness.
- ❖ Be in proportion to the overall body.
- ❖ Have a generous jaw, even bite and rounded cheek bone.
- ❖ Have a good width between the nostrils.
- ❖ Have a straight profile (a heavy Roman nose or overly dished profile is discouraged).
- ❖ Have ears which are neat, well-set, in proportion to the head and not too large.
- ❖ Have a broad forehead.
- ❖ Have eyes that are large and set well apart with a bright, intelligent, kind expression.

### **Neck: The neck should**

- ❖ Be clean through the throat with a slightly deeper throat latch than lighter breeds.
- ❖ Slightly arched, more prominent in stallions.
- ❖ Strong and well-muscled.
- ❖ Not too short, in proportion to back length.
- ❖ Tied in well at the shoulder and withers.

### **Shoulders & Withers: The shoulders should be**

- ❖ Deep, well laid back and sloping.
- ❖ Powerful with well-developed muscles.

### **The withers should be**

- ❖ Well covered, rounded withers.
- ❖ Level with the croup.

### **Chest & Body: The chest should**

- ❖ Be well-muscled, broad and powerful allowing for a large lung/heart cavity.
- ❖ The muscle along the bottom on the chest should appear as in inverted "V" shape as it ties into the forearm.
- ❖ The barrel should
- ❖ Be deep with well-sprung ribs.
- ❖ Have a solid covering of muscle.
- ❖ Have a flank as deep as the girth.

### **Back: The back should**

- ❖ Be short coupled, broad and strongly supported.
- ❖ Have ample muscle sloping slightly upwards towards the croup.
- ❖ Have a short, wide and strongly muscled loin.
- ❖ Be in proportion to the rest of the overall body

### **Legs & Movement: The legs should**

- ❖ Be set well under the body.
- ❖ Be straight, clean, with plenty of dense, flat bone and well defined joints.
- ❖ Have hocks which should be broad and clean with the modified closer hock-set of a pulling horse, but not as close as the modern draft type.
- ❖ Have a pastern angle which matches the angle of the shoulder.
- ❖ Have medium sized, round shaped hooves capable of carrying the frame without stress.
- ❖ Well-developed frogs, hard, strong hooves and wide heels.
- ❖ Show a stride which is correct, supple and powerful showing good impulsion from behind. It should be effortless in appearance.

### **Hindquarters: The hindquarters should**

- ❖ Be well-rounded, with a muscled croup tying into powerful hips giving the appearance of an "apple butt" shape.
- ❖ Show good length from the point of the hip through the haunch, and should balance the shoulders.
- ❖ Have a tail which is well set, it should not appear too low.

### **Hair: The hair should**

- ❖ Be thick and luxuriant in the mane (Double manes are common but not required).
- ❖ Contain a forelock which is full and long.
- ❖ Have abundant leg feathering starting at the knee and hock and run down the front and back of the leg (though silky, straight feather is preferred, curly or wavy is acceptable).
- ❖ Most importantly, have feather which covers the hooves all the way around.
- ❖ Be abundant in the tail.
- ❖ Often include a beard, whiskers and muzzle hairs (moustache).

### **Colour: Gypsy Cobs come in a large variety of colour.**

- ❖ All colour, markings and patterns are acceptable. All eye colours are accepted.

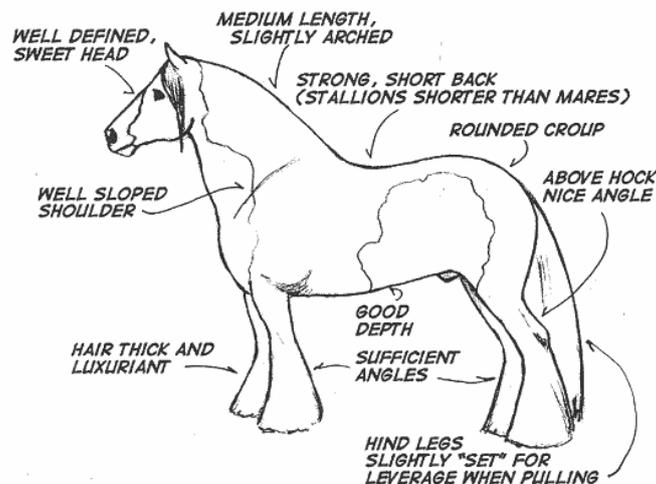
## Gender

- ❖ Stallions must portray the male characteristics of the breed including
- ❖ Presence, 'a look at me attitude'.
- ❖ Curiosity.
- ❖ Muscling and pride while being controllable and willing.
- ❖ An arched, well crested neck.
- ❖ Two fully descended, normally shaped testicles from 3 years of age.
- ❖ Mares must reflect the feminine qualities of the breed, being
- ❖ Easy-going, sensible and willing. The disposition of the mare is critical when raising her foal.
- ❖ Perhaps slightly longer in the backs than males.
- ❖ Perhaps slightly longer in the ears than stallions whose ears are usually shorter and shapelier.

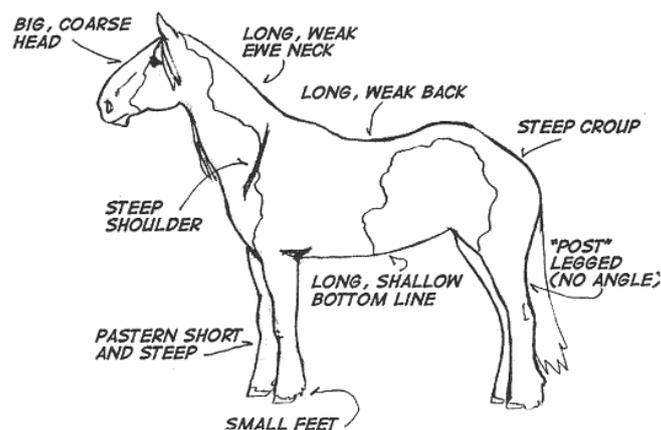
## Disposition: The Gypsy Cob should, above all else,

- ❖ Be a strong, kind and willing partner; loyal and eager to please.
- ❖ Display a very intelligent character.
- ❖ Be manageable, mannerly and respectful.
- ❖ Be alert, confident and courageous.
- ❖ Display a docile temperament, tractable nature and sensible disposition with a genuine sociable outlook.

### **GYPSEY HORSE—GOOD CONFORMATION**



### **GYPSEY HORSE—MOST COMMON FAULTS**



## **The History of the Gypsy Horse:**

The Gypsy Cob is a much older breed than most people realise. It is a breed born of purpose fuelled by necessity. The Gypsy cob breed as it is today is thought to have begun to take shape shortly after World War II ended. When the British Romani first begun to live in vardo's around 1850, they used mules and cast off horses of any suitable breed to pull them. These later included "coloured" horses, which had become very unfashionable in mainstream society and were typically culled. Among these were a significant number of coloured Shires. Many of these ended up with Romani breeders, and by the 1950s, they were considered valuable status symbols within that culture. Spotted horses were very briefly in fashion around the time of World War II, this pattern was derived from an infusion of the English Spotted Pony and this coat pattern can be found in the breed to this day. However, the spotted horse quickly went out of fashion in favor of the coloured horse, which has retained its popularity until the present day. The initial greater height of the breed derived from the influence of both Clydesdales and Shires, both of which possess feather. Feather became and still remains highly valued in the Gypsy Horses.

In the formative years of the Gypsy Horse, the Romani bred not only for specific colour, profuse feather, and greater bone, but also for increased action and smaller size. To increase action at the trot, they turned to the Section D Welsh Cob, the Dale Pony, and Fell Pony to add a more animated trot to the breed without loss of other desired traits. Another trend in breeding was a steady decrease in height, a trend still present among many Romani breeders. In the 1990s, the breed's average height still was in excess of 15hh, but horses of 14.3 to 15hh, were beginning to be viewed as more desirable, primarily for economic reasons as the Romani travelled less. The breed most used by the Romani breeders to set not only the reduced size but also the type of the modern Gypsy Horse was the Dales Pony, described as "thick, strong, active yet a great puller". The Dales, a draught pony, also preserved the bone, feather, and pulling capabilities derived from the Shire and Clydesdale breeds but "sweetened" them down into a smaller and more economical package. The Dales also added a "coal black" feature to the gypsy cob as it made the black coat colour richer and darker and therefore more desired. The Dales and to a lesser extent, the Fell Pony interbred with the Shire and Clydesdale provided the basis of today's Gypsy Horse.

"Gypsy gold does not chink and glitter. It gleams in the sun and neighs in the dark"

## **Judging the Gypsy Horse**

In hand judging is a positive evaluation of balance, structural correctness, breed sex characteristics, and muscling. When judging, it is important to make a positive evaluation of each horse's resemblance to the ideal and to find the horse that best combines the traits listed above. It is easy to find what you don't like about any animal and eliminate horses on that basis. However, when a positive evaluation is used, it produces a consistent result that finds the most complete horse. All judging involves the ability to find those animals that most resemble the ideal and to rank them accordingly. In order to judge in hand horses it is important to have a thorough understanding of the traits used in the selection process. This process begins with balance.

## **Balance**

Balance is the single most important characteristic in equine selection. It is determined by the skeletal framework of the animal being judged. When judging, it is important to attempt to visualise and evaluate the skeleton of the horse underneath its hair, feather, muscle and other tissues. Because it is sometimes difficult to visualise the skeletal framework of the animal being judged, there are several easy reference points to evaluate balance. Nothing is more critical to balance than slope of the shoulder. Slope of shoulder changes when the angle of the shoulder is increased or decreased. Not only does the top to bottom line ratio of the neck change, but the ratio of the length of back to length of underline also changes. It is ideal to have a short top line and a long underline of the body. A long back coincides with the short neck of the straight-shouldered horse. In addition to overall balance, slope of shoulder influences length of stride. The straight shouldered horse will also be shallow-hearted, as measured from the top of the withers to the chest floor. Unlike the balanced horse whose legs are approximately the same length as its depth of heart, the straight-shouldered horse's legs will be longer than its depth of heart.

## **Breed and sex characteristics**

Gypsy horses shown in hand should exhibit breed characteristics, or type. Type is defined as the overall body style and conformation unique to a specific breed. In addition, mares should exhibit femininity and stallions should exhibit masculinity. Femininity and masculinity are most easily recognised in the head and throatlatch areas. They are qualities hard to define but easily recognised.

## **Structural correctness**

Structural correctness of feet and legs is a major area of consideration in judging. When standing beside the horse, the judge drops an imaginary line from the point of the buttocks to the ground. Ideally, that line should touch the hocks, run parallel to the cannon bone and be slightly behind the heel. The horse with too much angle to his hocks is sickle-hocked, and the horse that is straight in his hocks is post-legged.

Ideally, when viewed from the rear, any horse should be widest from stifle to stifle. Another imaginary line from the point of the buttocks to the ground should bisect the gaskin, hock and hoof.

When viewed from the side the ideal should again stand on a straight column of bone with no deviation. A horse that is "over at the knees" is buck-kneed, and the horse that is "back at the knees" is calf-kneed. Obviously, calf-kneed is the most serious condition. When the horse is viewed from the front, an imaginary line from the point of the shoulder to the toe should bisect the knee, canon bone and hoof. The hoof should point straight ahead. When a horse toes out, it is splay-footed and this horse will always wing-in. When a horse toes-in, it is pigeon-toed and that horse will always paddle out. The most serious of these is the horse that wings-in, because it has a tendency to interfere, i.e., strike its legs with the opposite hoof as it travels. If the cannon bone is off-centred to the outside, it is bench-kneed. The ideal has no deviation from these descriptions and it is essential for the judge to recognise structural defects.

## **Blemishes**

It is also important that judges evaluate the cause for blemishes and abnormalities such as splints, ringbone, bowed tendons, and curbs. Are they the result of structural incorrectness or unrelated

## Judging the Gypsy Horse continued....

causes? Obviously, incorrect structure should be considered and penalised more than tissue changes that are not the result of any visible structural deviations.

### **In summary**

In hand judging is a positive evaluation of balance, structural correctness, breed and sex characteristics. The ideal Gypsy Horse shown in hand is a horse that possesses the following characteristics.

The horse should possess eye appeal that is the result of a harmonious blending of:

- ❖ Attractive head.
- ❖ Long sloping shoulder.
- ❖ Deep heart girth.
- ❖ Short back.
- ❖ Strong loin and coupling.
- ❖ Well-defined and muscular stifle, gaskin, forearm and chest.

These characteristics should be combined with straight and structurally correct legs and feet that are free of defects.

An in hand horse judge has a responsibility to find the animal that is the best positive combination of the characteristics described in this handbook. This is a class that stands alone, a class where the horse is judged based upon its conformation and similarity to the breed standard as described by the AGHS—Australasian Gypsy Horse Society.



## **Presentation standards of the Gypsy horse**

Trimming of the Gypsy horse can be a controversial practice, because the beards, moustaches, feather and full, luxurious manes and tails are breed characteristics of these horses.

- ❖ The gypsy is generally shown untrimmed and unplaited including the head and face, mane and tail, however exhibitors should not be penalised for trimming or plaiting.
- ❖ Some trimming of the bridle path is accepted, especially for the ridden section.
- ❖ Manes and tails should be full and flowing. Feather should be full, curtaining the coronets and hooves. 'Consideration should be given when harsh Australian conditions cause unavoidable feather breakage - especially in hotter, drier climates.'
- ❖ Long hairs under the jaw and those protruding from the ears may be trimmed but exhibitors should not be penalised for not doing so.
- ❖ Whiskers should not be trimmed.
- ❖ The tail may be trimmed at the bottom if excessively long.
- ❖ No false hair, artificial colouring or make-up should be used.

## **Dress code for Handlers and riders**

Handlers should be correctly attired for the class and compliment the horse. The emphasis should be on presentable, neat, clean and practical. Footwear must be closed in and suitable. Ladies should always tie hair back neatly

### Ladies

- ❖ A good fitting pair of slacks, moleskins or a neat skirt.
- ❖ A shirt and tie or a neat well fitted shirt and jacket.
- ❖ Riding attire or a well fitted suit is also acceptable.
- ❖ Leather runners or lace up shoes with good grip to allow you to run.

### Gentlemen

- ❖ A good fitting pair of moleskins, slacks or riding attire.
- ❖ A shirt and tie or a neat well fitted shirt and jacket.
- ❖ Riding attire or a well fitted suit is also acceptable.
- ❖ Leather runners or lace up shoes with good grip to allow you to run.

### Optional

- ❖ Hats - can be very valuable for sun protection, it should not however be the centrepiece of the outfit.
- ❖ Gloves and Waistcoat.