

FORM 6 - NEW MEMBERS

MASSEY PONY CLUB

FOR FIRST TIME PONY OWNERS AND THEIR PARENTS

Welcome to Pony Club. You have made the right decision to join Pony Club. It is the perfect place to learn all there is to know about how to look after a pony and to learn to ride in a safe environment with expert instructors. Hopefully you will have a lot of fun along the way.

To begin with, there seems so much to learn and it may seem at times, like everybody else knows so much more. It could be quite easy to feel left out or confused by conflicting information. This is why we have decided to write this, to help you and your parents to an easy start at Pony Club and to help you make the most of your first season. Apart from reading this you should buy the Pony Club Manual (Version One). It contains all your child needs to know in order to pass the first two pony club grades and is a good introduction to riding and horse mastership.

Rules And Safety

A lot of the rules and regulations may at first seem petty and designed to make life difficult and riding more expensive than it is already. Most of these rules are there to ensure the safety of horse and rider. Shoes without heels may cause your feet to slip through the stirrups, or your foot may get stuck in the irons when you fall and this is very dangerous. A long sleeved top for cross country gives you just that extra bit of protection. The hard hat needs no explanation, it should comply to safety standards and the numbers are regularly upgrade and checked.

The pony's tack will be checked at every rally and may be checked at one day events held at Pony Club. Once a month, points will be awarded on "turn out" (for the cleanest, neatest tack and general appearance). Dirty and neglected tack is a hazard to the pony's health and may be unsafe if any of the stitching is worn. It is also essential that the tack is fitted correctly. If you are at all unsure, ask your instructor or one of the senior riders to check it for you.

Rally Nights

The Pony Club rallies start at 6:00 pm sharp. This means that for a mounted rally you need to be ready to ride and mounted at that time. We assemble in front of the Clubhouse important news and information will be given out here, so parents, if your children are young or do not always remember messages, make sure you hear the notices as well. This is where you are told where to go for your rally. Sometimes there are unmounted rallies. These involve learning about horse mastership and how to care for your pony. For your pony club grades you need to know this as well as being able to ride. In these instances, you can leave your pony in the paddock or at home, but do remember to wear your Pony Club uniform. If for any rally you are late, go to your instructor and wait for him/her to tell you what to do. If you need to leave early, make sure you excuse yourself so no-one will worry where you have gone and send out a search party.

What About Grades Then?

Your instructor will tell you when you are ready to go for your first Pony Club grade. He/she will make sure that you know all you need to, to pass the test. The club organises these exams and you want to look your best on the day. Passing your "D" certificate will allow you to wear a little "D" on your pony club badge. The certificate grades are D, D+, C, C+, B, A & H. For C+ and B the exam is divided into two parts ridden and theory, you may choose to do only one part.

How Do Parents Fit In At Pony Club

Pony Clubs are youth organisations though we like to think of your Pony Club as a family club. We are forever trying to raise funds to improve facilities and to be able to send teams away to external competitions. Events and Ribbon Days are one way the club makes money. Events take a lot of preparation though. Arenas and rings need to be set up, jumps need to be put up and cross country courses need to be flagged. Many hands make light work and the more the merrier applies. Running a Pony Club is also quite labour intensive. The grounds need to be looked after, the jumps need to be painted and the toilets need to be cleaned from time to time. Working bees are held to meet these needs. Working bees are a good opportunity to get to know some of the other parents, have some fresh air and exercise, and you might learn a lot too. Even if you think you have no skills, we will surely find something you can do. Our club is only going to be as good as the effort we are prepared to put into it. It is during working Bees that we make life long friends and the kids have huge amounts of fun working together, children that are not amongst these working Bees can feel left out so we encourage you all to join in.

Apart from working bees, help is always needed on the day of an event. Running an event (especially a one day event) requires a lot of men (and women) power. We need ring stewards, fence judges, writers, time keepers, gear checkers, canteen assistance and a variety of other roles. Again, here is an opportunity to learn a lot about the pony club movement. Your child may be on a lead rein anyway at the beginning. But even if not, help is sometimes needed to hold ponies while the children do certain exercises, and sometimes parents can also make themselves useful by putting up jumps, or setting up barrels. Apart from that, you can always watch and enjoy the summer evenings in the open air and chat to other parents of horse mad youngsters. You may be able to gather all kinds of useful information about where to get good quality feed, or bargain riding gear.

The End Of The Season

... will come all too soon. There is the AGM to look forward to though. Everyone should attend this, because it is at the AGM that we discuss the year that has been and the year to come any grizzles are aired and we celebrate our Season ending with wine and nibbles. The prize Giving is set and it is here that all the prizes and trophies are given out. There are a lot of trophies to be won, and not just for those who have been successful at competitions. Awards are given for those riders who have shown the most improvement, for those who have the highest score for turnout and attendance at rallies, etc. And it is a chance to see all your new friends again before the long winter break. In the meantime - have a happy, safe and successful season!