

ALPHABET SOUP

What are all of these organizations, and why should I join?

by Karen Briggs

Horse show entry forms can be confusing at the best of times. But when you have to deal with multiple acronyms for multiple organizations, that doesn't make it any easier. Just who or what are all of these bodies, and why are they listed on the form? Is membership in each mandatory if you want to compete? And if not, why would you want to be a member?

For the answers to these burning questions, we turned to Los Angeles Hunter Jumper Association Executive Director, Charlotte Skinner, who has years of practice turning alphabet soup into common sense for LAHJA exhibitors. Charlotte begins by emphasizing, "Theoretically, you don't need to be a member of anything to compete at LAHJA shows.

"But if you want to accumulate points for year-end awards, or compete in the Medal classes, at LAHJA-sanctioned shows, you do need, first and foremost, to be a member of the Los Angeles Hunter Jumper Association."

Membership in LAHJA is \$50/year for senior competitors, \$40 for juniors, and \$10 per horse, or you can invest in a lifetime membership for \$400.

Charlotte explains, "A good proportion – perhaps 75% -- of our shows are also sanctioned by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), the national governing body for the sport. Any show recognized by USEF requires that competitors hold USEF membership OR pay a non-member day fee. There are certain classes or divisions for which a non-member day fee won't suffice; you have to be a member." A full list of those classes which require USEF membership can be found at www.usef.org. If you're still not sure whether you're required to be a member for the division you wish to enter, consult with your show secretary.

There is also a requirement for horses competing in USEF hunter/jumper shows to either be recorded by the USEF, OR have a USEF-assigned identification number. The i.d. number, says Charlotte, is the less expensive option – it's free if you register on-line during a horse show, or \$10 if you mail the application in to the USEF office in Kentucky (a new charge for 2007 – it had been waived the previous two years). Having your horse recorded is necessary, however, if you want him to be eligible for Horse of the Year points ... and there are certain other classes which require that the horse must be recorded as well: any jumper class which awards prize money, and classes for ponies or junior hunters who need to have a permanent height measurement on record, for example. "At this point you can record your horse yearly, or for a lifetime," she notes, "though lifetime recording is on its way out."

In the near future, Charlotte says, the USEF will be instituting an opt-out option for equine identification numbers, under certain circumstances. This will be useful for those who are, for example, taking a school horse to a single local show but not intending to campaign that horse on a regular basis.

USEF membership fees are \$55 for a senior competitor, \$35 for a junior.

Wait, we're not done! Showing in the open hunter and/or jumper classes at USEF recognized shows now also requires membership in the recently-formed United States Hunter Jumper

Association (USHJA) – or the payment of a non-member fee of \$20 per competition. USHJA membership will set you back \$55/year for senior, active members, and \$45/year for juniors. (There is also a lower ‘associate’ level membership available for those not showing at the USEF recognized level, and a life membership for \$1000.) The USHJA provides its own publication and makes its members eligible for programs such as the USHJA Foundation Awards, a Rider Recognition program, an Amateur Sportsmanship Award, affiliate awards, a mentoring program, and other perks such as a trainer’s directory and resource guide, an owner’s resource guide, discounted rates for magazine subscriptions and USHJA clinics and seminars, and an annual convention focusing solely on the hunter and jumper disciplines.

You do not need to be a USHJA member if you only compete in breed-restricted hunter or jumper classes, only if the competition is open to all breeds. Charlotte notes, “If you do compete in breed classes or shows, you need to pay a ‘breed discipline fee’ to the USEF as well.”

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

USEF, USHJA, and LAHJA are the three major membership requirements for competing at USEF-recognized LAHJA shows ... but they aren’t the only organizations with whom you can compete and accumulate points. Some shows are also sanctioned by the Pacific Coast Horse Shows Association (PCHA), which covers the states of California, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada. “Membership in PCHA is \$50 per year for seniors, \$35 for juniors, and \$750 for a lifetime,” says Charlotte. “If you are not a member and are competing at a PCHA show, you can opt to pay a non-member fee of \$10. I’d say about half of our shows are PCHA sanctioned, and most of our members are also PCHA members.”

“Year-end awards are the main incentive for membership in most of these associations. LAHJA also has a substantial scholarship program which many young riders find appealing.”

MAJORING IN MEDALS

So NOW are we done? For the most part, yes ... unless you are an equitation rider planning to compete in Medal, Maclay, or Marshall and Sterling classes. “If you want to qualify for the finals at the Washington International, for example, there’s a fee for the organization to keep track of your points,” Charlotte says. “There are any number of Medal classes, and as a rule you must be a member of the organization offering the Medal class,” she elaborates. “I’d like to see it made simpler for competitors and especially for parents.” Ask your coach to explain which fees you’re required to pay, and to whom, if you’re an equitation rider who’s not sure.

The collection and processing of data, sanctioning of quality horse shows, and a year-end awards program are the main mission of the LAHJA and other similar organizations. Of course there are the additional perks as well: newsletters, access to websites, opportunities to participate in various different scholarship programs and clinics, and free educational articles -- like this one!