

Horse fact sheets – Grading / Cards

Your grading card is proof of your membership with the Pony Club Association of Victoria (PCAV). One of the most important parts of your membership is your insurance in case of accidents, so your grading card is proof to those who don't know you, such as when you compete at other clubs, that you are insured. Once you have attended two rallies on a particular horse or pony, you can ask the DC to be graded on that pony. The lowest grade is Grade 5, through to the highest, Grade 1, or in the case of showjumping, F through to A. In conjunction with your instructors, the DC will decide which grade is the safest and most suitable for you and your mount as a combination. For example, an experienced horse and rider might be Grade 2, but an experienced rider on a new inexperienced mount might only be grade 4. A young rider on a small pony or a beginner rider, even on an experienced mount will usually be Grade 5. Your grading will be written in your card. If you have attended pony club on more than one mount you may be graded for both, and they may be the same or different grades.

Once you are graded at a particular level, you may work to move up to the next grade over a period of time. There are no set rules for when you should be re-graded, and you are encouraged to discuss with your instructors whether they feel you are ready to move grades. They are the best people to help you assess your capabilities and to give you ideas for areas that might still need to be worked on. The DC and your instructors will take into account how you and your mount are progressing as a team, both at rally and in competitions that you have entered. In some cases, you may be given the opportunity to demonstrate with your mount over a particular course to help the DC arrive at an appropriate decision.

The purpose of grading is to allow you to compete in the various pony club competitions offered. It tells another club which doesn't know you what level you are safe to ride at. At each competition you attend, you must submit your grading card at the start of the day, and that club's secretary will check that you are graded correctly for the competition. If you are not, you will not be allowed to ride, as the club has no way of knowing what level would be safe for you to compete at. There are some competitions where grading is not required (usually described as Open classes) – details and rules will be provided by the relevant club.

You will notice that your attendance is also recorded in your grading card. This is also used for competitions. To be eligible for any pony club competition, you must have attended at least 50% of your club's rallies in the 12 months preceding the competition and at least two of those attendances must be on the mount you are competing on. If you are 17 years or older the required attendance drops to 25% to allow for school study commitments of older riders. At each rally you can only be granted attendance for one mount. Again, if you don't have sufficient attendance when you go to a competition, you won't be allowed to ride.

So before you enter a competition on a particular mount

- 1) Check that you are correctly graded on that mount.
- 2) Check that you have attended at least two rallies on that mount in the 12 months prior to the competition.
- 3) Check that you have attended at least 50% (25% if over 17 years) of rallies in the 12 months prior to that competition.
- 4) Remember to take your grading card with you.

For more information, go to the pcav web site (www.ponyclubvic.org.au) has two guidelines that are very helpful. Look for the *Handbook of ByLaws 2010 (Grading Sections)* and the *Guidelines for Grading* both of which can be downloaded.