

THE ELITE SCHEME

The Elite Scheme was established to help breeders, owners and potential owners interested in New Forest ponies to discover the consistently successful bloodlines in the breed. The aim is to highlight not only the achievement of individual ponies, but to link these to their sires and dams and/or progeny.

We were the first UK native breed society to devise and implement a scheme such as this and its aims are to show the qualities of our ponies in as many different disciplines as possible, thus enhancing our steadily growing reputation for good quality, useful ponies. With a breed of pony that is capable of such a diverse range of disciplines, it is an enormous task to try and establish a means of highlighting the best points of individual ponies with a fair comparison across the disciplines. The elite scheme is ambitious and it is still not perfect, and further changes may be made in the coming years as it continues to evolve.

SCORING

What do I have to do to get elite points? An owner or competitor does not have to do anything other than compete at their chosen event. All results are collated by the Society office. We are continually seeking to ensure a better geographic spread of events from around the country, as we are aware that, at present, there is a bias towards the south.

What do the Annual Results Lists tell us? They are only a snapshot of what has taken place that year. It should be remembered that this is a long-term scheme and as the aim is to identify the consistently successful lines, then perhaps the more important list is the cumulative sires list which looks at the results of their progeny over several years.

SCORING SHOWS

Each year eight shows are designated as 'Elite Shows'. The list is published on the website, newsletters and annual report. The shows are weighted, so that at some, points are gained for 1st to 3rd place, and at others, from 1st to 6th place. In addition to these shows, ponies placed at RIHS, HOYS and Olympia also score points.

PERFORMANCE

Ponies score points for achievements in the following events and competitions:

The Society's Boxing Day Forest Point to Point.

British Riding Clubs national finals – these cover jumping, dressage, dressage to

music, eventer trials, combined training, and horse trials.
NPS Dressage Championships.
Sports Pony Stud Book Society gradings.

GRADING AND INSPECTIONS

The Society runs its own grading and inspection schemes. Grading points are added into the Elite Scheme. Grading scores are much higher because they can only be achieved once. They do, in some ways, distort the annual results list, which should therefore be regarded as a snapshot.

PERFORMANCE GRADING

Jumping

Ponies are assessed on technique, attitude/obedience, athletic ability and overall impression. The height of the jumps is related to the height of the ponies, and four grades are available.

Currently the only way to achieve Jumping grades is by attending the Society's annual Grading Day.

Dressage

The four Dressage grades are based on the BD system, Preliminary, Novice, Elementary, Medium, and tests are judged under BD guidelines.

The dressage grade tests can all be ridden at the annual Grading Day in late September.

It is also possible to achieve dressage grading through a pony's affiliated BD record – this has been helpful for those ponies based away from the New Forest area, and for achieving the higher level Elementary and Medium awards.

PERFORMANCE TESTED STALLIONS

Stallions are awarded Performance Tested Stallion status when they have achieved both Dressage and Jumping Grade One performance grades.

MARE GRADING

Any registered mare is eligible, but they must be a minimum of four years old, and have had at least one foal. All mares must be of a suitable condition to be judged.

Currently, there are two opportunities for mares to be graded each year.

1. Grading on the Forest of the Forest-run mares. A two-week period is set aside during July when a judging team is available to inspect mares on the

Forest.

2. A Grading session in late September at the Beaulieu Road Sales Yard, for both stud and Forest mares. This venue is suitable for all mares, whether handled or unhandled, and either with or without a foal at foot.

STALLION INSPECTIONS

The Society's stallion licensing scheme requires that all colts must be inspected by the Society and vetted by an approved vet, at age two or three.

The inspection is exactly the same for both Forest-bred/Forest-run and stud colts. Colts approved for licensing at the stallion inspections are awarded elite points.

FUTURITY SCHEME

Elite points are awarded at both the Autumn Colt Foal Assessment and at the Spring Yearling Colt Assessment.

FOREST-RUN PONIES

In addition to the various classes for Forest-run ponies at the breed show – Forestrun stallions, Commoners' Mares, and Youngstock off the Forest – points can be gained for the Forest-run section of the scheme by winning Forest stallion premiums, Forest Fed competition premiums, and through Forest mare grading. A mare that wins three Forest Fed premiums is automatically graded without the need for further inspection by a grading panel of judges.

HIGHER LEVEL ELITE AWARDS

We have now built up sufficient data to establish two types of higher level elite awards, one based on a pony's own performance, and then progeny awards for both stallions and broodmares.

The Performance Awards are open equally to all stallions, mares and geldings and are based on that pony's individual achievement in gaining the required number of elite points.

The Progeny Awards – a pony's individual points are automatically accrued to its sire and dam as progeny points. The dam must be graded herself in order to be eligible for the Mare Progeny Awards.

ASH, BEECH AND OAK GRADES – THE HIGHER LEVEL PROGENY GRADES FOR GRADED FOREST MARES

The Ash, Beech and Oak grades are the Elite Progeny Awards for Graded Forest-Run Mares. It became apparent that, with just a few exceptions, Forest-run mares find it extremely difficult to meet the stringent criteria which has been set for the Mare Progeny Silver and Gold Grades. Firstly, they have fewer foals than the stud brood mares. Secondly, their colt foals are generally sold at Beaulieu Road and scattered to all parts of the country and although many of them go on to achieve at the highest level in multiple disciplines, these are often outside the catchment area of our elite points scheme. Finally, their filly foals are retained on the Forest as breeding replacements, and so are rarely shown.

However, many of these daughters are as successful in the Forest Fed Competition as their dams, and many of them are graded. In fact, we are now seeing a third generation of graded grand-daughters. These mares represent the very best lines in our foundation stock and they are worthy of recognition, and this is now achieved through the awarding of the Ash, Beech and Oak Grades.

The Ash Grade is the first level, and is based on a minimum of two Forest-bred progeny who have scored elite points. The mares can then move up through the Beech and Oak Grades when their progeny have attained the requisite numbers of elite points. After this they can move across to the Mare Progeny Silver Grade.

To reiterate, this is only for Forest-bred progeny. If a Forest-run mare has stud-bred foals later in her life, then she ‘crosses over’ to the main scheme, but taking her Forest-bred progeny points with her.