

Definitions

1. What is dressage? The word "dressage" comes from the French "dresser" = to train. Classical dressage training is based on "The Pyramid", a systematic method of developing the athletic abilities of the horse to produce a harmonious, obedient, balanced and happy horse (and rider!).
2. What is FEI? It is the Fédération Équestre Internationale (International Equestrian Federation) which regulates all international equestrian events. The advanced level tests in dressage are labelled FEI and are governed by FEI rules.
3. What are CDIs? A CDI competition is a Concours de Dressage International (an international dressage competition). It may be a CDI*, a CDI** or a CDI***; each of these levels has progressively higher requirements. A CDI-W is a World Cup Qualifier; a CDI-Y is for young riders aged 16 to 21. A CDI is run in accordance with International Rules for equestrian sport, veterinary issues and international dressage competitions.

In CDI competitions a number of the procedural matters are handled differently than in competitions organised under national rules. For instance, the riding time when an individual horse/rider combination will actually start in a competition is made the evening before the event, rather than immediately after entries have closed. This adds to the atmosphere of the event and most organisers of a CDI or other international competition make a social event of the time draw.

4. What is a Kur or a Freestyle? The horse and rider perform to their own chosen music using all the technical elements required at their level of training in their own original design of patterns to show the harmony and beauty of the partnership. The scoring includes points for interpretation of the music, creativity, the degree of difficulty exhibited, rhythm and energy, along with technical marks.

Could I Join A Dressage Group?

1. Can anyone join? Yes. You don't even need a horse. You just need to be interested. What is there for you if you love horses but don't want to/can't ride? You can help, encourage, volunteer, organize, talk and share stories, write, take photos, groom – just ask the executive: they'll have ideas for you.
2. What kind of horse would I need? Any horse or pony (and rider) will benefit from dressage training. Not all horses are physically capable of attaining the higher levels, but it's rewarding to work to the limit of enjoyment for both horse and rider. Mules do well, too. A dressage program for gaited horses is being developed.
3. Can I do dressage if I have a disability? Yes! Canada has a Para-Equestrian program, and sends riders to the Para-Olympics. There are instructors in Alberta who have experience training riders with mental and physical limitations including degrees of blindness. Riders who wish to compete can be rated into 4 classes – with a rating card they can participate in regular dressage tests or specially designed para-tests. There are regional, Canadian and international competitions. Look at www.paraequestrian.ca and ask an ADA executive member for more details.
4. What should I join? That depends upon the type of involvement you want. If you are just getting into dressage, join your closest Area Group: it's an opportunity to meet people and get information and may encourage you to get involved in local events. The Area Group membership requires that you also join AEF (the Alberta Equestrian Federation) which gives you insurance coverage needed for some of the activities. If you expect to compete in national status shows, you will have to join Equine Canada and Dressage Canada. Optional groups include CADORA and the USDF.

What Can I Join?

1. What is out there to join? ADA and its Area Groups, AEF, EC, DC, CADORA, USDF.... Juniors can join all of these. Young people who would like to do both dressage and jumping can join the Canadian Pony Club. Juniors and seniors who enjoy the challenge of stadium jumping and cross-country jumping along with dressage can get involved in Horse Trials. A Western rider might like reining – the Western style of dressage.
2. What is ADA? The Alberta Dressage Association is the provincial umbrella for all the Area Groups. Its primary purpose, in supporting the sport, is to co-ordinate events, activities and funding which affect all the Groups.
3. What is an Area Group? Each Group is centered in a geographic part of the province, except for the Junior/Young Riders which registers young riders from the whole province. CA/ADA is the Calgary Area, CC/ADA is Chinook Country, covering the southern area, including Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McLeod, CL/ADA is active in the north-east section around Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Lloydminster; EA/ADA is the Edmonton Area, drawing its members from the northern and central portions of Alberta; PA/ADA represents the Parkland Area in the Red Deer district.
4. What does the Area Group do? Basically it organizes events, clinics, shows and educational sessions in its area. It supports the development of skills, knowledge and enjoyment. Any or all of the Groups may be involved in provincial efforts.
5. What are AEF, EC and DC? AEF is the Alberta Equestrian Federation with offices in Calgary (www.albertaequestrian.com) EC is Equine Canada which includes dressage, jumping, eventing, endurance, reining, para-equestrian, driving, coaching and breeds & industry (www.equinecanada.ca). DC is Dressage Canada, our dressage branch of Equine Canada (www.dressagecanada.org). These organizations can tell you all about themselves: try their web-sites for more details than you can imagine!
6. What is CADORA? This is the Canadian Dressage Owners and Riders Association, based in Ontario, with chapters across the country. The web-site is www.cadora.ca
7. What is a USDF GMO? It is the United States Dressage Federation, Group Member Organization. Our GMO, registered under the EA/ADA, is the only International Group.
8. Could I join the USDF GMO? Yes, you just have to be a member of ADA, which you join automatically when you join an Area Group. The membership fee is between \$35 and \$40, depending on the exchange rate. Contact Jan at jansim@telus.net for details.
9. And why would I want to join the USDF GMO? You would receive the monthly dressage magazine U.S.D.F. Connection, and qualify for member rates when attending U.S. shows, events, symposiums, conventions. You can get member rates when purchasing USDF merchandise, and be able to log on to some on-line training programs and information.

More About Dressage

1. Where could I see dressage in action? Check out the News, Shows and Events on the ADA website, and also the AEF site. There are some websites with videos of international shows. You-tube has some. Local stables may have schooling shows, breed shows for Morgans and Arabs usually have dressage classes; look for Pony Club shows and Horse Trials in your area.
2. Where can I learn dressage? There are stables in most areas that offer dressage training. The executive members of each Area Group can suggest stables and trainers, and may have lists of instructors for your Area. Some stables have lesson horses; at others you would need your own horse or arrange to lease a horse. Visit more than one stable or trainer to see what style appeals to you. You can also make inquiries and observe at any of the shows.
3. How much does it cost? From the price of a group lesson to the bills for international competition! It depends on the level you enjoy and want to (or can) invest in. You can start with a back-yard horse and end up importing a warm-blood from Europe...go from a boot-with-a-heel to a full shad-belly show outfit...begin with practice at home then trailer to a national trainer...you might find yourself doing it all until you are at least 90 years old, so you may need a day job for a while! If you like it, you'll never be bored, you'll always have something to do and you'll find that you can go on learning more forever....
4. Do Canadians do well internationally? It's an expensive sport, with travel one of the greatest costs. Canada has some excellent international competitors, past and present. Present: Alberta's Bonny Bonello and Alexandra Wilson and Canada's Christlöt Boylen, Evi Strausser, Cindy Ishoy, Leslie Reid, Ashley Holtzer.... There are Pan-American games, North American competitions, Commonwealth Games, Invitational competitions in Australia, University Student Games in Europe....
5. Is it an Olympic sport? Yes. And not just Dressage as its own discipline, but it is also a vital part of the 3-day Eventing competition.
6. Where can I find books about it? The city bookstores, tack shops, the city libraries, and web sites such as Amazon.ca give you access to a lot of books and videos. Some of the Area Groups have video/book libraries. Look at our ADA reading list in Resources.
7. What do dressage riders win at competitions? There are always ribbons, and sometimes there are prizes. When sponsorship has been generous there can be prize money! At the end of the competition season, there can be local, provincial and national awards for horses and riders who have excelled. There are some privately sponsored awards.