



Manitoba Horse Trials

Annual Report 2017

Submitted by:
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Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

Membership

This year Manitoba Horse Trials (MHT) had 37 full memberships. 6 were juniors and 31 were seniors. Reciprocity with Pony Club brought 6 riders who did not also hold a full MHT membership. MHJA brought in 5 riders. Membership fees, both full and temporary, earned MHT close to \$2000 this year. We had 8 coaches pay their course user fees. We use these fees to track the coaches involved with eventing in our province. These coaches had 108 rides pay a onetime day fee to use our course. The entire cross-country course was rented for either a day or a weekend on four separate occasions this season. We posted signs last year on the xc course in Birds Hill Park to make casual riders through the park aware that the xc course requires them to have a coach present and must pay a fee to ride the course. In total, the course user fees paid to MHT were just over \$2000.

Reciprocity With Other Local Clubs

In 2017, MHT held reciprocity memberships with Pony Club, Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association, and Dressage Winnipeg. Being a member of one of our reciprocity clubs allows members to ride on the Birds Hill xc course. They were also allowed to attend a listed number of functions put on by MHT without having to purchase an MHT membership. However, reciprocity members cannot collect points towards year end by attending functions put on by MHT. The top two riders in each division receive a plaque and prize at our year end awards banquet. Reciprocity allows MHT members to attend shows that other clubs put on to work on dressage or stadium.

Reciprocity has brought new people in to try some of our derbies. The hope is that they see how much fun eventing is and make the switch!

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

Clinics and Shows

MHT hosted two Snow Bound clinics last winter. The first was run at the Winnipeg Greenhawk Store and was geared towards providing information to new riders interested in trying the sport for the first time. The second was run at a schooling show in Brandon and provided more in-depth information about the sport. As something new last winter, MHT held a paint night fundraiser which helped pay some of our bills.

MHT also hosted a Chelan Kozak clinic in April which had 13 riders attend from Starter level up to Training. The clinic focused on Stadium and flat work at Eastridge Farm on Saturday and was held on the cross-country course on the Sunday.

MHT worked closely with our local Pony Club (PC) to host derbies this summer. The first two derbies were held in May and June with a meet the fences clinic on the Saturday and a dressage and cross-country derby on the Sunday. Meet the fences the day before added an increase work load to the secretary as course user forms, waivers and fees had to also be submitted for this day. Rider had to have a coach along to take them on course. The meet the fences day was popular because it lowered anxiety levels for new and lower level competitors at the derby who now had a chance to jump some of the fences the day before. Many of the fences used in the derby were blocked off to prevent damage to the footing and fence before the derby and leave some as a surprise as it would be at a real event. The third derby in July had all three phases, and the October derby ran dressage and cross country on the Sunday. We feel that the derbies were well attended, with 16+ riders per derby. Some changes we made this year to boost derby attendance included offering a pace class with no jumps (just flags), a starter level, an online registration form, and an easy flat rate to attend for the day. Another reason for increased

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

interest in MHT was due to the semi-trailer load of jumps that arrived in spring (see write up below). We sent an online satisfaction survey after each derby to riders, volunteers and spectators to collect information on how to improve. None of our derbies were EC sanctioned. It is almost impossible to find and be able to afford the required officials. Having to purchase an extra EC membership, our Provincial Horse Council membership, and MHT or reciprocity membership seems to deter many of the grass roots riders. Lower level riders make up most of our derby riders. Their membership and attendance at events is our major source of support for this club.

There was only one Manitoba Horse Trial event this year. Willville Horse Trials ran from Starter level up to Training level. Attendance was very poor with only 18 riders. This year the Pony Club did not combine Rally with the HT. This brought attendance down by 10 riders when compared to 2016. The second reason for poor attendance in Willville is the lack of dedication and long-term goal setting of many of the riders who participate in eventing in the province of Manitoba. For those dedicated to moving up in the sport, Willville is an important sanctioned show to attend. Willville is not a priority for those who participate in eventing only for entertainment.

Willville is held on private grounds. This reduces the burden on MHT's board of directors who are responsible for maintaining the only other cross country course in Manitoba, in Birds Hill Provincial Park. The Kevin and Norma Will, who own the farm and run the event, are finding it difficult to finance and to find the time to offer this event to xc riders and enthusiasts. One of the major challenges is to find and afford officials. There is a fee for the official's services, the cost of their flight and their accommodations and meals. It is no small expense.

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

Because Willville was the only EC event run in Manitoba this year, riders with goals of moving up in the sport must drive south to Minnesota and Wisconsin to move their horses up to and past the Training level. The drive south is more affordable and less time consuming than driving to Ontario or Alberta despite the complications of taking your horses across the international border.

MHT also participates in the Manitoba Equestrian Championships hosted by our provincial horse council. This show is attended by a number of different clubs riding in various disciplines across the province. This year, as a reward to the top four riders holding the most points as of September 1, they were personally invited to attend the Championship, allowing them to collect more points toward year end.

Birds Hill Park

In the past there were smaller events and cross-country courses that hosted competitions or schooling opportunities for eventers in Manitoba. Over the past ten years these properties have folded due to personal or financial challenges. Only Willville and Birds Hill Park have rideable courses open for schooling and competitions in all of Manitoba. MHT made the decision to try and run a HT in 2017 to give Willville organizers a break in offering riders a true HT to attend in the province. To ensure that the club was capable of hosting a HT, the board flew Barry Tyerman in from Alberta in fall of 2016 to evaluate the quality of the Birds Hill xc course and if he could use our facility and jumps to design a course from Starter up to Training levels in 2017. His findings were a reality check. Many of the jumps are assessed as either so out of date that they are now considered dangerous, or are in a deteriorated state, making them unsuitable to be used in a HT. The summary review of the evaluation is that we have no jumps

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

for a Starter course and very few usable jumps at the other levels. With this information we cancelled the 2017 event and spent the winter pricing out and planning which jumps we needed in order to complete our course and run a Horse Trial in 2018. We managed to get a large enough donation from the Equine Foundation of Canada to, along with much of our savings, purchase 23 new portable jumps. In spring we organized a paint and stain day to get the jumps ready for the summer. The new jumps caught the eye of some new riders and we did see an increased interest in both schooling and derby attendance this season. Currently we are sharing 6 jumps with Willville. These jumps either need to be replaced or moved back and forth between the Events. We also need to require jumps to complete a starter course and are hoping to get some material donated to build them before spring 2018. As stated in the assessment, some of the current jumps are in need of repair and will need a jump builder or course designer to address this issue before July of 2018. The final steps to completing the bare minimum needed to keep Birds Hill cross country course up to standard is a significant cost. MHT board members plan on using this winter to come up with some ideas on how to meet these costs. Any suggestions of input from our members would be welcome.

Challenges and Opportunities

As with most clubs across Canada we are struggling with low membership, little participation and finding volunteers to run our derbies and events. This is especially challenging when our provincial body is responsible for holding and promoting all but one of the events. This problem is exacerbated because our events are held on public grounds (battling jump vandalism, unauthorized use, etc.).

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

We cannot get authorization for advertising in the Park for sponsors, so we need a temporary option for sponsors to make it financially attractive to sponsors to donate materials or money to the club.

MHT is heavily dependent on volunteers, and borrowed equipment such as mowers. The MHT Board is small, with few who are consistently active in the organizing and running of the club. This year MHT rented a larger mower to give the Birds Hill course a much-needed mowing of the entire fields. The mowing took our one volunteer over 10 hours to complete mowing the course, with a cost of just \$1000 in equipment rental. We had a dry summer, so we got away with only one mowing but, realistically, we will need a minimum of two mowings per season if we hope to run a sanctioned event.

This season our focus is on running a EC Silver sanctioned HT in Birds Hill in July 2018. This will include looking for funding and sponsorship to pay for the building or repair of jumps to be able to run all levels from Starter to Training. After the purchase of 23 portable jumps last winter required to bring Birds Hill up to minimum standards, our budget is stretched. Low membership numbers is still a problem. Membership fees and entry fees for both derbies and HT help to offset costs so new members are needed to meet the club's costs. By putting new jumps on the Birds Hill course, MHT has managed to make our club look more attractive, rather than being members of a dying club with decrepit jumps. We are hopeful that the jump improvements will breathe new life into the sport of Three Day Eventing in Manitoba, and attracting a new group of riders and support systems to keep our club active and profitable for years to come.

Manitoba Horse Trials – Annual Report 2017

