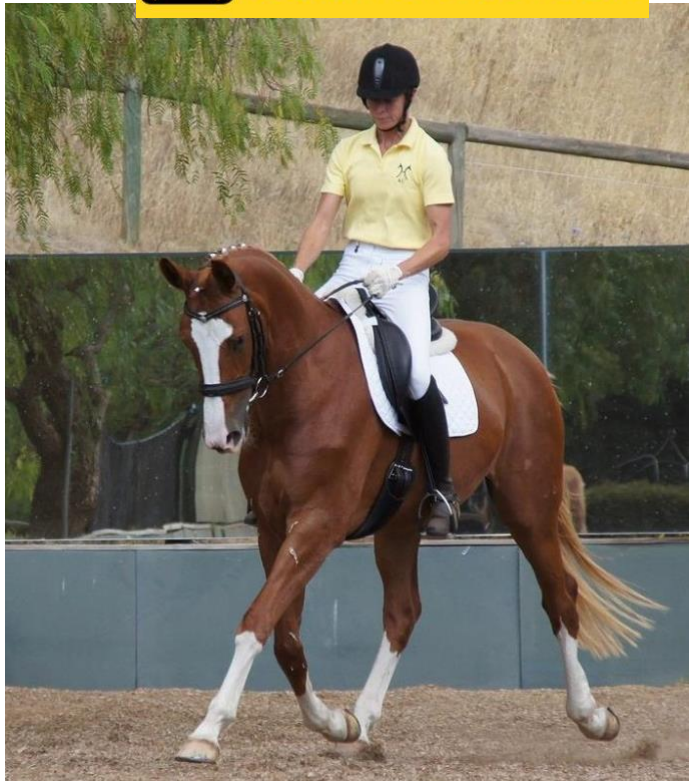


SUCCESS AROUND THE WORLD

SUCCESS ALL OVER THE WORLD



HANOVERIAN HORSE
SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



Hanoverian/Rhineland
Mare Performance Testing
Guidelines
(conducted as part of the
National Tour)

An Introduction

The information which follows serves as a step-by-step guide to assist Hanoverian Horse Society of Australia members in preparing their mares for the Mare Performance Test offered within Australia at the Annual HHS Inspection Tour. Test requirements and procedures, as well as an in-depth article on Free Jumping training, is included.





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The Origins of Mare Performance Testing

The Mare Performance Test was first established in Hannover, Germany, in 1987. Most registered mares in Germany have been presented for this test and it is mandatory for Hanoverian Premium Mares and stallion mothers. This test also helps establish a Breeding Value Index for the mare's sire



which is a source of valuable information about the stallion's strengths and heritability (refer image of the Hanoveraner Jahrbuch Hengste – Stallion Year Book).

The first Mare Performance Test ever held in Australia was during the 1997 HHSA Inspection Tour. At that time, an important step in the development of the Hanoverian horse in Australia was taken, helping breeders to make more informed decisions about their breeding programs.

Until then, the selection of mares in Australia was carried out by judging the exterior appearance as well as the main paces including trot, walk, and in-hand. These assessments gave conclusions about the general suitability of each mare as a riding horse. With the introduction of the Mare Performance Test, however, the criteria which are important for the use in future competitions can be directly recorded and judged. This included the quality of the main paces under the rider and the rideability, which is the basis for dressage. Also



included was the jumping ability in Free Jumping as the basis for the breeding of show jumpers. From this, HHSa breeder members obtained important information relevant to breeding more successful performance horses.

To encourage owners to nominate their mares for Mare Performance Testing, the Hanoverian Premium Stud Book in Australia was established (previously known as the Elite Stud Book). For mares that have been presented for classification as a three year, four year old or five year old and received a final score of eight or more, the Performance Test is the next step to achieve the prestigious title of Hanoverian Premium Mare. Further details can be found in the Breeding Guidelines located on the HHSa website.



The Mare Performance Test was developed for young mares, which are typically 3 to 4 years of age (or 5 years of age if they have had a foal). Older mares may be eligible for performance testing on application to the HHSa committee. This testing may be worthwhile for establishing scores for the Jumper Breeder Program, for example. The point of the Mare Performance Test is to assess the natural ability of the young horse, rather than expecting each task to be completed without fault and/or with perfect manners.

The Mare Performance Test is open to Hanoverian birth registered mares or mares from other populations that have been classified into the HHSa Stud Book. Mares from other populations cannot become Hanoverian Premium Mares.

How to Apply for Performance Testing

If you are a mare owner and wish to nominate a mare for Classification / Performance Testing on the HHSa Annual Inspection Tour, you will need to complete a Mare Classification / Performance Testing application on our website. The annual tour usually occurs around late February / early March each year, with nominations closing at least one month prior to this date. A copy of the required form can be found on the HHSa website at www.hanoverian.org.au. For your mare/s to participate, entries must be received on time to be eligible.

What Costs Are Involved

It costs \$150 for each mare to be Performance Tested. This fee covers the cost to employ professional Test Riders at each testing venue across Australia.

Professional Test Riders

Each year, the HHSА nominates Test Riders for each testing venue. It is important that each test be carried out in a professional and unbiased manner. For this reason, only riders who do not have any connection with either the horse and/or the owner are employed. If the Test Rider or owner indicate that there is a conflict of interest, the owner of the mare must present her at a different location or, in the case of there being sufficient numbers to warrant more than one Test Rider, with a different Test Rider.

The Normal Rider

It is the responsibility of the mare owner to provide a rider for their mare. For the best results, the owner/rider should be very familiar with the mare and training should have been conducted on a level commensurate with the age of the horse.

The Testing Venue

Each year, the testing venue will be decided by the HHSА Committee. The venue must have a full size arena, preferably indoor. Jumping lanes need to be constructed and these can be either indoor or outdoor. Sufficient stabling and/or secure yards are also necessary.



The Mare Classification is conducted at the same venue as the Performance Test (if they are both being done in the same year). To enable efficient planning of the itinerary, it is essential for members to nominate for Classification and Performance Testing by the due date.

Official Results

Once the Annual Inspection Tour is complete, results are finalized and sent to the mare owner. This includes the original pedigree papers, classification results and performance testing results sheets, which are notated with the status of the mare under the HHS seal.

The Mare Performance Testing Procedure

The following outlines the three areas in which each mare will be assessed.

1. Main Gaits Under Saddle

Trot – Result (out of 10)

Canter – Result (out of 10)

Walk – Result (out of 10)

MAIN GAITScore (average out of 30)

2. Rideability

Mare Rideability by Owner/Rider (Awarded by Classifier/s)– Result (out of 10)

Mare Rideability by Test Rider (Awarded by Test Rider)– Result (out of 10)

RIDEABILITYScore (average out of 20)

3. Freejumping

Style/Manner- Result (out of 10)

Ability/Scope - Result (out of 10)

FREEJUMPINGScore (average out of 20)

OVERALL SCORE (average of areas 1, 2 and 3 above)

The individual points awarded for each section of the Performance Test range from 0/10 (did not perform) to a possible 10/10 (excellent). Each section, including the gaits under saddle, rideability and freejumping, will contribute one third each towards the end result. In Germany, it is believed that the overall result is not of main importance. Instead, it is more important how this overall

result is achieved. For example, mares with outstanding jumping ability may not demonstrate outstanding results in their main paces or rideability. However, the same mare could be very valuable addition to a jumper breeding program, especially when partnered with a sire/s possessing strengths she may not possess.

The Course Of Events

The following is the order of events which can be expected to be carried out on the day.

1. Freejumping for all Mares

For this purpose, a jumping lane of three jumps is constructed. The first two jumps encourage the mare to find her rhythm. They should not be too high as it is at the last jump (usually an oxer), that the jumping ability will be tested. It is very important that the final jump is built in a solid manner to increase the horses' respect of the obstacle. Therefore, it is preferable that numerous poles and planks, ideally red and white in colour, are used.



2. Assessment of the Gaits

For this section, mares will be presented in groups if possible. The arena should be preferably 20m x 60m so that each mare can develop their full ability along the sides. The paces will be examined in order of trot, canter and walk on both reins. The Inspectors may also ask for some lengthened strides.



3. Assessment of the Rideability

The examination of the main paces will give an early indication of rideability. To strengthen this judgment, each owner/rider will be requested to perform various movements on their mare which may include riding on a circle, serpentines or halting from the trot. The judging of the group will take approximately 15 minutes. After that time, each mare will be ridden individually by the test rider who will give a further assessment of their rideability.



4. Classification

If the mare has not already been examined for her Stud Book classification, this will take place after the test riding, when the mare is unsaddled or after the Free Jumping before being saddled (depending on the number of mares being presented).



Specific Requirements For Mare Performance Testing

(Dr. Ludwig Christmann, translation by Kerstin Bomke)

Freejumping

During the Free Jumping, the mare should show good potential ability, and a good overall style at the jumps. She should be freely forward going enough in her attitude without the need for too much support from the whip handler. The ideal technique of the horse over the jump should be “round” with an arched back and a low nose. This is called “good bascule”. The lower forelegs should be angled towards the nose in order to inhibit faults from hanging legs.



Uneven forelegs folded under the body are not desirable. Similar things are to be said about the hind legs. Hind legs are scored low if the horse pulls them up under its body or lets them hang. The horse should open itself over a fence. Other undesirable techniques over the jump are highly raised head and neck. That will cause a straight back instead of an upwardly arched one.

There are no standardised heights for the evaluation of the jumping ability. Significant in the evaluation is the overall behaviour before, during and after the jumps and the care used to handle the given test. If it is clear that a horse has difficulty jumping low fences, it should receive an adequate score after two or three rounds. At the other end, for the highest scores of 9 or 10, a horse has to convincingly jump an impressive fence.

Technique and scope are closely connected to each other. Most horses are able to jump high fences if they have good technique. It may happen, however, that horses with outstanding scope do not take low fences seriously, and only show their capability over high jumps.

The Main Paces

There are a few criteria which apply to all three paces. Elasticity is of great importance, which is the swing (Schwung) through the whole body. This Schwung is what gives the rider a pleasant feeling and is essential for the quality of the paces, as well as the demand for cadence. The movement should be forward going with rhythmically elastic steps and good active hindquarters, originating from a supple back.

The horse must show freedom and regularity in the paces. It must be well put together in the course of the movement. Trot and canter should show a natural uphill trend. In trot, the horse

must be able to lengthen the steps developing from an active and regular working trot. A certain knee action is desired if it develops from a free moving shoulder and enables the legs to point straight forward. The canter should be light, rhythmic and with regular strides nicely covering the ground. The walk should be a marching pace in which the footfalls of the horse's feet follow one another in a correct four time beat, well-spaced and maintained. It is not desirable if the horse is stiff in the back and is not forward going, showings short steps or just walks on the forehand. A great mistake in walk is if the pace is not maintained in four time, that is, the horse should not walk, for example, right front leg and right hind leg at the same time and show a two time pace.

The Rideability

Rideability is the interaction between horse and rider. Does the rider desire to sit on the horse? Does the mare accept the rider's aids with submissiveness and without any tenseness or resistance, so that the rider has an effect on the horse easily and without any effort? In other words, does the rider feel comfortable?

This is closely connected with the rideability. The horse must willingly respond to the aids of the rider with a good active mouth, accepting the bit, and answering the rider's aids without any resistance. It is not expected that the horse completes all the lessons perfectly, rather to give the impression that the horse is prepared to work together with the rider. It is a big fault in rideability if the horse shows resistance in its mouth. This results often from a wide, inflexible and solid neck which prevents accurate bending.

Riding Test (to be called)

1. Enter on right rein in working trot. Go large.
2. After one circuit of the arena in working trot show some lengthened strides on the next two long sides.
3. Change rein on a short diagonal in working trot.
4. Complete one circuit at working trot and then show some lengthened strides on the next two long sides.
5. Go back to working trot and change rein on a short diagonal.
6. Do a 20m circle and transition to canter, then go large.
7. After one circuit of the arena in working canter show some lengthened strides on next two long sides.

8. Change rein on a short diagonal through trot.
9. Show one circuit at working canter and then show some lengthened strides on next two long sides.
10. Go back to working trot, then walk, then halt on the long side making sure there are three horse spaces between each horse. Halt for a few seconds.
11. Take up the reins and proceed at working trot.
12. Do a 3 loop serpentine then continue at working trot into a 20m circle allowing the horse to stretch long and low “zugelausderhandkauenlassen”.
13. Go back to walk, allowing the horse to stretch and relax.

Preparation of the Mare

It is not the point of these rules to give instructions about the training of young horses. It is important that the mare is worked by an experienced rider for at least six to eight weeks before the performance test. The rider must be able to work and exercise the horse so that it shows itself on the day of the examination with a good head carriage and is able to show the quality of its paces. For the preparation towards the main education, the horse should be familiar with the bit, bridle and saddle and should have a good education on the lunge rein. For the preparation of freejumping, regular jumping training is necessary.



During the preparation period, it is appropriate to free jump the horse once each week. It is all up to the specialised education by a competent rider. If all this is given to the mares, I'm sure that with the good horsemanship of our Australian breeders, we will have recollections of the show that we can all be proud to look back on.

Presentation of the Mare and Rider

Presentation is everything! The first impression the inspector has should be of a polished and immaculately presented horse and rider. Ensure that your tack fits your horse comfortably (saddle, bridle, saddle cloth, girth, etc). It should be cleaned the day before hand to ensure you have all of the components you need. Of course, the tack should also fit the rider and not restrict their movement or affect the horse's center of gravity. Check that your clothing is suitable. An approved black helmet, HHSA yellow polo shirt, white jodhpurs and black top boots are recommended. Ensure that your mare has her mane plaited, as well as a healthy shiny coat. During the Performance Test, a white saddle cloth will complete the picture. However, during the Classification, your mare must be presented wearing a bridle only (protective boots can be worn during the free jumping phase).



Freejumping- The pedigree alone is no guarantee

The article below, reprinted from the March 1991 edition of The Hanoverian by Hartmut Kettelhodt, Stable Master at Verden, gives an excellent outline as to the hows, whys and wherefores.

Freejumping is part of the natural schooling of young horses. Older horses may benefit with individual training to correct past mistakes. It enhances self-confidence and, at the same time, offers (for example where dressage horses are concerned), an interesting and relaxing workout in conjunction with free running.

These recommendations, based on experience in the auction training, mainly relate to working with young horses. Freejumping can, provided the horse is suitably well developed, be considered as part of the training and schooling program of a relatively young horse without any cause for alarm. A systematic and quiet working regime, based on capability, allows the youngsters to jump single fences as well as combinations. These young horses are thus starting their jumping education in a rather playful manner and are carefully and slowly prepared for their future jumping career under saddle. The young horse will display its natural ability without the rider's influence as due to the speed on the approach.

In the middle of the long side, there is a combination which is approached on the left rein and jumped facing the exit. The first jump is a smallish upright with a pole to

ease take-off, followed by an oxer at a distance of about 7-7.3m. Both jumps are on the low side to start with so they only consist of cross bars. To avoid running out, barriers are put up before and between the jumps. To guide the horses generally and assist the people holding the schooling whips, we build a run around the school out of dressage markers.

We normally require the assistance of four people, three to guide the horses with schooling whips and one to build and put up the jumps. One whip carrier is placed by the jump and the other two are positioned in the middle of the two circles. They take their orders from the trainer and are quiet, if not passive, members of the team. They keep an ever watchful eye on the horse and are ready to encourage the horse if required. Loud talking and unnecessary use of the whip make the horse lose concentration.

Let The Horse Do Its Bucking

The horses are brought in a head collar or bridle. To protect their legs it is essential to use either boots or bandages. Before starting the Free Jumping, the horse should be allowed to run free to have a good buck,

get rid of excess energy and generally relax. Once the animal returns to trot or a quiet canter, the Free Jumping over low fences may begin. New and unknown fences must be shown to the horse beforehand. The youngsters will then lose any misplaced respect and without doubt put in a much calmer performance.

Every horse will always start with a set height which has been determined according to the horse's ability and schooling.

As a rule you start with the easy jumps and gradually bring the horse on to cope with the difficult ones. The first jumps are considered to be mere jumping exercises aimed to relax the horse. It is only when the horse goes into the jump without hesitation and displays adequate confidence over the jump, that jumps are put up in the form of a small and inviting oxer.

Because the horses are led in quietly and are not allowed to run into the first jump, the second jump, a narrow oxer, follows at a distance of 6.80-7.00m. This second jump should be about 20cm higher than the first one and should be constructed of planks and poles. An oxer asks the horses to pay attention and does not on the whole allow them to over jump. Horses do not normally refuse and the necessary impulsion remains intact.

The main focusing point, however, is the third jump, another oxer, following at a

distance of 7.20-7.50m. Whereas the first jumps are intended to develop rhythm, the third also provides a guideline to establish both suitability and talent. A particularly good example is a free standing jump with telescopically operated sides, specifically designed for this purpose. An inviting jump where the poles are arranged slightly behind one another. Because horses respect bright red colours, we tend to use red and white striped planks and poles. A brush placed in the middle of the oxer provides a welcome change and ensures increasing awareness. To ascertain that this last jump will be tackled with rhythm and impulsion, enough space must be allowed after the jump. A lack of space, caused either by the closeness of the walls in the arena or a packed gallery will force the horse to break in flight. This often frightens the horses and stops them going forward freely and willingly.

Horses who have never taken part in Free Jumping are, for the first couple of times, led over the poles, which are placed almost at ground level, on a long rein. After their first shy approach, they begin to follow their handler without problems and with increasing confidence. It is enough if, on the first day, the horse jumps both jumps willingly and calm, without a change in tempo. The next time you may even put a little oxer to finish with increasing confidence with correct jumping.

To further the jumping education and presentation of our auction candidates, we build a combination of three jumps. Horses find it easier to find a flowing jumping rhythm and often make better progress over the jump itself. Because some horses tend to run into the combination a bit fast, they are as a rule, lead into the jumps. This method results in the horses remaining calm between runs and they are released in the corner towards the combination in either walk or trot. It is essential to build what is called a jumping lane to enable the trainers to catch the horses easily after the last jump.

To Further Alertness

The first jump in the jumping lane should be built at a distance of 7-8 metres from the corner (2 canter strides). The first jump should be upright and should be relatively small at a height of 40-50cm. It should, however, be constructed in many different ways, for example, using the lower parts however not be frightened off and no job is to be too big. Mistakes due to lack of concentration ensure more concentration and further the learning process but serious faults at the jump must be avoided at all costs. Should a horse overdo a jump in an unnatural and tense fashion, then the task must be reduced on the next jump. Trust is the key to the future progress of the horse's education. Never gamble with the horse's trust.

As the horse's confidence increases, the last oxer may, without fear, be put up and widened, always taking account of the horse's age and ability. In order to keep the height of the jumps in proportion so as not to break the natural rhythm, the middle fence too ought to be put up slightly.

Training At Home

Giving credit to the above mentioned system, the difficulties of the same also warrant mention; firstly the building of the course requires a considerable amount of work and manpower. It needs 3 to 4 people equipped with schooling whips and 2 people to lead the horses on. How many breeders and exhibitors then have this number of experienced staff to hand at home, as we have the good fortune to have available in the Verden team? It might be worth considering arranging Free Jumping training sessions, backed by the Association and offered through the riding or breeding clubs and indeed the young breeders club.

Following the motto, "what one can do well is never too much for two" would surely seem to be a recipe for success.

Such training sessions would be of enormous benefit to our young horses as regards their basic jumping education, either on a training basis or to prepare them for a jumping career, regards balance, or indeed, interference of any kind. The breeder, owner and trainer are thus able to

gain valuable information early on in the Freejumping as to the horse's talent and future jumping career, auction selection, stallion licensing and mare performance testing. Or, alternatively, simply to discover the jumping potential of one's own stock, plan its future schooling, draw up marketing strategies and, finally, select the right partner as regards breeding quality offspring.

Even though Freejumping and jumping under saddle are two completely separate issues at the end of the day, one can, on the whole, assume that a horse which shows above average ability in Freejumping will later also give a clever performance under saddle.

Deviations are not common and are more often than not attributable to the influence of the rider. To evaluate the jumping ability of young horses, often not backed, there is indeed no alternative. It is not, therefore, without reason, that Freejumping is considered of great importance when judging the potential of breeding stock, i.e. the stallion licensing, stallion performance test and mare performance test. Potential buyers at Verden auctions are also of the opinion that the Freejumping is an important part of the evaluation process.

Evaluation

The evaluation must take into account character, temperament, inner calm,

intelligence, the will to win and enough courage as well as natural talent and willingness; a combination of these characteristics will no doubt produce a good show jumper. These are all criteria which can be established at the outset.

To judge the more technical points of a jumping performance requires somewhat more routine of the horses. It is only once the horse has complete confidence that it is able to concentrate on the task in hand and work out its own approach. Regular work will produce stronger muscles, the jumping will become more powerful, the horse approaches the jumps much calmer and becomes increasingly more balanced. It is only now that jumping is more certain, the horse learns how to collect, improves its leg technique, uses its neck correctly and jumps relaxed with its back well rounded. The fences may now be put up and the overall picture as regards jumping ability finally begins to make sense.

Inherited jumping ability is only one indispensable ingredient for a recipe for success because the pedigree alone does not jump. Freejumping must therefore be practiced with young horses on a regular basis, for instance, once a week at the outset. The first objective is to build up confidence. The horses should approach the fences willing and relaxed and so gain increasing confidence. To guarantee success, both the selection and building of the fences as well as quiet and correct

handling of the horses are of paramount importance.

First Tests

The first tests are carried out over two jumps in conjunction with free running. If this exercise is carried out in a large indoor arena, namely 60m in length, then it is advisable to reduce the length to 40-50m. We have discovered that otherwise the horses are coming in a bit too fast and not only lose valuable energy unnecessarily, but also jump flat

Should a horse approach the combination too fast it may be slowed down by placing a ground pole 3.5m before the first jump. It may also be appropriate to put the first fence up to command the required respect and alertness. If the horse increases its speed within the combination, thus jumping too close to the second jump, a ground pole is placed between the two jumps.

No Records

“Higher, wider - repetition and one more time”. Take heed, there is the danger, particularly in relation to horses endowed with outstanding jumping talent, that they are made sour by asking simply too much of them. It is far better to see two to three jumps over 1.0m performed in a calm and collected manner, than one tensed high jump over 1.5m which will never be repeated

because the horse has frightened itself over his own giant leap.

The main aim of the first months in training is to get the horses used to all shapes and sizes of jumps. They will learn, through the different sizes and combinations of jumps, to deal with changing situations. This will teach them to be alert, have a good look first, think and jump with more respect and quality. The horses must

Standard Situations

The distances mentioned above are only approximate measurements. Whatever applies to the individual situation must be judged by the trainer because he is aware of

the horse’s level of schooling, knows its approach into the fences and its overall jumping performance. The distances will therefore vary with different Freejumping venues. I am thus of the opinion that distances are measured precisely and accurately recorded so that they may be used as a guideline in further training. If one were to try and achieve optimum conditions for every single horse then fences would have to be constantly moved about. It is therefore imperative that a standard measurement is adopted so that candidates who vary a great deal from those set measures will have to demonstrate their ability given standard situations. Given these conditions, the horses will and can achieve optimum jumping performances. Because they are led up to the jumps, they will remain calm and are able to concentrate on the set task. They are let off

individually at the right speed, approach the combination correctly and, given the correct distances, gain

It is clear, however, that short term training is by no means enough to give a clear and concise conclusion. After two to three training sessions, one may only hazard a vague guess for spectacular but fearful jumps have no meaning and are often merely confusing.

It is very important when building and preparing the venue to create the correct environment to enable the horse to come to terms with its given task. There can only be progress if distracting factors of any kind are removed. The venue must have regard to the present situation and level of schooling.

Diagram 1: Freejumping with Two Fences (20m x 40m Arena)

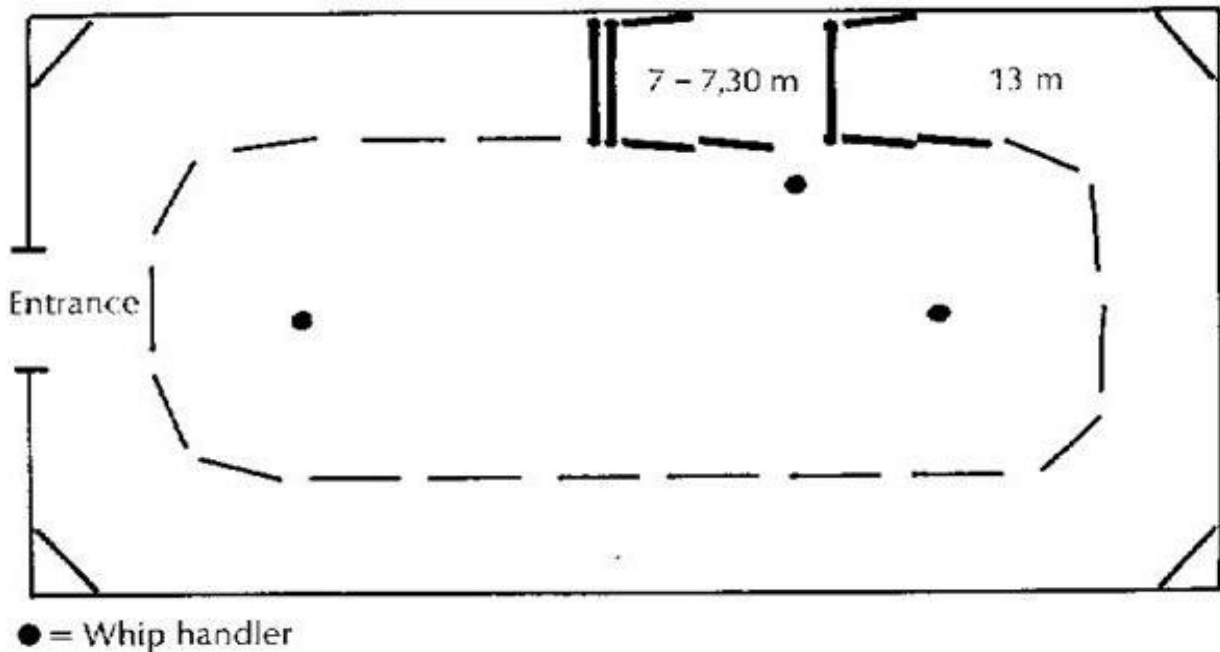
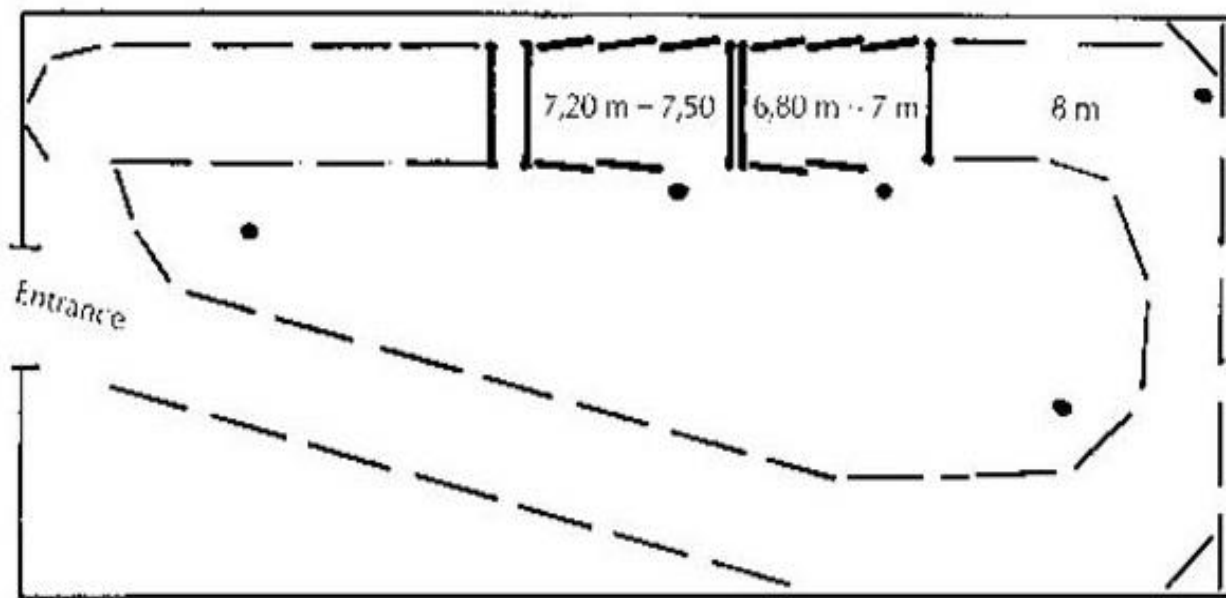


Diagram 2: Freejumping with Three Fences (20m x 60m Arena)



● = Whip handler