



PARA-EQUESTRIAN IN NEW ZEALAND

An easy to follow guide to joining the sport of Para-Equestrian and competing in New Zealand including Para-Equestrian explained, the classification process, the use of compensating aids, how to join the sport, competition and pathways

A beginners guide

Para Equestrian in NZ

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What is Para-Equestrian?

Para-equestrian in NZ is the sport of dressage and consists of five sport classes called 'grades' for athletes with physical and visual impairments.

Para-Equestrian Dressage is the only Equestrian discipline that is included in the Paralympic Games, where it has been a regular fixture since 1996.

To create opportunities for all people with impairments to compete and achieve their goals in equestrian sport, athletes are classified according to the level of their impairment so as to provide for meaningful competition. Riders are judged on their display of horsemanship skills and are permitted to use devices called "Compensating Aids" such as two whips, connecting rein bars, stirrup bands and other aids.

How do you become a Para Equestrian?

PE is open to athletes with any type of physical or visual impairment who have been "Classified" into a PE Grade (sport grade).


What do I need?

- Be 12 years or over
- Have a Classifiable Disability that is permanent, verifiable and measurable
- Be able to ride or learn to ride
- A suitable horse, over 4 years of age, not necessarily a seasoned dressage horse
- A support crew of 1 or 2 people if you are Grade I or II
- Transport
- A positive "I Can" attitude
- An appreciation or love of dressage, if you don't have you will soon get it!
- A sense of humour and sportsmanship, after all it is horses and it is a sport!

What is "Classification"?

The competitor's **mobility, strength and coordination** are assessed in order to establish their Classification Profile. People with similar functional ability Profiles are grouped into competition Grades. The Grades range from Grade Ia for the most severely impaired, to Grade IV for the least impaired. The competition within each Grade can therefore be judged on the skill of the individual competitor on their horse, regardless of the competitor's impairment.

National Classification - In order to partake in Para-Equestrian Dressage in NZ, riders need to be classified according to their functional ability. In NZ, all classifications are conducted by FEI Accredited Classifier and Chief National Classifier - Vicky Melville, Nelson.

ESNZ PARA-EQUESTRIAN IDENTITY CARD	
Name:	
ESNZ PE ID Card No.	
M/F	D.O.B.
Functional Profile:	
	

What Physical Disabilities are Classifiable?

Eligible Impairments must be permanent, verifiable and measurable and include:

1. Visual Impairment (B1 or B2).
2. Movement and mobility
 - Neurological –hypertonia (spasticity, rigidity, dystonia), ataxia, athetosis; peripheral nerve damage; impaired muscle power.
 - Examples of presenting health conditions may include:
 - Cerebral palsy
 - Stroke
 - Acquired brain injury
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Other - congenital limb deficiency; amputations; impaired passive range of movement; impaired muscle power; leg length difference; short stature.
 - Examples of presenting health conditions may include:
 - Arthrogryposis
 - Spinal cord injury (SCI) –complete or incomplete
 - Muscular dystrophy
 - Brachial plexus injury
 - Spina bifida

Non-Classifiable Disabilities

A health condition which is difficult to measure or grade and thereby Ineligible. Examples of such conditions include:

- wear and tear on joints due to advancing age
- general debilitating disease
- obesity
- osteochondritis

- impairments of mental functions (including intellectual Impairment or retardation; conversion disorder; dementia; learning impairments)
- skin diseases
- sleep related movement disorders
- hypermobility of joints
- low muscle tone or hypotonia
- haemophilia
- epilepsy
- respiratory conditions
- fatigue as in fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalitis
- vertigo or dizziness
- internal organ dysfunction or absence
- IBSA Class B3, and B4
- cardiac/circulatory conditions
- hearing impairment
- pain
- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy or Complex Regional Pain Syndrome without permanent joint impairment and severe muscle wasting.

What are the Grades?

Grade Ia - Athlete have severe impairments affecting all limbs and the trunk. The athlete usually requires the use of a wheelchair in daily life.

Grade Ib – Athletes here have either a severe impairment of the trunk and minimal impairment of the upper limbs or moderate impairment of the trunk, upper and lower limbs. Most athletes in this class use a wheelchair in daily life.

Grade II - Athletes in this class have severe impairments in both lower limbs with minimal or no impairment of the trunk or moderate impairment of the upper and lower limbs and trunk. Some athletes in this class may use a wheelchair in daily life.

Grade III - Athletes in grade III have a severe impairment or deficiency of both upper limbs or a moderate impairment of all four limbs or short stature. Athletes in grade III are able to walk and generally do not require a wheelchair in daily life. Grade III also includes athletes having a visual impairment equivalent to B1 (very low visual acuity and/ or no light perception).

Grade IV - Athletes here have a mild impairment of range of movement or muscle strength or a deficiency of one limb or mild deficiency of two limbs. Grade IV also includes athletes with visual impairment equivalent to B2 (higher visual acuity than visually impaired athletes) competing in the grade III sport class and/ or a visual field of less than five degrees radius.

Grade V - In New Zealand Only we have introduced Grade V. This is for athletes who do not fit the FEI/ Paralympic criteria but whose disability may benefit from the use of some compensating aids when riding. Competition for this level is run in New Zealand only at Club level.

What are Compensating Aids?

"Compensating Aids" are used by riders to compensate for physical or sensory limitation resulting from their impairment which enables them to ride a horse.

It is not used to compensate for lack of riding skill or as an aid to enhance the horse's performance.

Compensating aids can be divided into two types:

1. **Adaptations or modifications** to equipment or attire to compensate for loss of function e.g. loop reins for a rider with poor grasp or securing stirrup leathers to the girth for poor control of limbs

Adaptions or modifications can be made to:

- Saddlery – saddles, bridles/ reins, stirrups
- Other riding equipment – whips, spurs
- Riding attire - riding footwear, gloves
- Postural supports and orthoses - straps to control body parts, prostheses, braces

2. **Aids to assist the rider** to compete on an equal basis with other competitors e.g. use of callers for riders with a visual impairment.

Use of Aids to Assist (may require exemption to a particular rule):

- Aids to compensate for sensory loss – commander/ caller
- Miscellaneous

Competing as a Para-Equestrian in New Zealand

Para-Equestrian is one of the 5 disciplines governed by ESNZ (Equestrian Sport NZ).

National Level

In 2015 a National level was introduced to bring PE to the grassroots rider. With competition at club level and the use of beginner to low level dressage tests depending on the Grade.

Grade Ia = short arena, walk, medium and free, 20m and 10m circles

Grade Ib = short arena, walk, medium and free, 10m half circles

Grade II = short arena, walk and trot, medium and lengthened. 10m circles, 3 loop serpentine.

Grade III = long arena, equivalent to Level 1 Dressage. Walk, trot and canter circles.

Grade IV = long arena, equivalent to Level 2 Dressage. Walk, trot, canter and leg yield.

Grade V = long arena, walk, trot, canter, shoulder in, 5m canter loops, medium paces.

FEI Championship Level

The Para Horse of the Year, Regional, Island and National Championships are contested at this level and use the FEI dressage tests as performed at the Paralympics. The FEI tests require a higher level of dressage skill and contain more transitions and technical movements. The 3 FEI tests performed at each Grade are the Team test, Championship test and a Musical Freestyle.

Grade Ia = short arena, walk tests with medium and free, 8 & 10m circles and halts, no collection. All lateral work at walk and trot allowed in freestyles

Grade Ib = short arena, walk and trot, lengthened strides and ¼ turns on the haunches, no collection. All lateral work at walk and trot allowed in freestyles.

Grade II = short arena, walk and trot, medium, ½ turns on haunches, rein back, no collection. Walk and trot lateral work and canter and counter canter allowed in Freestyles.

Grade III = long arena, equivalent to level 3. Collected and medium paces, shoulder in, rein back, ½ turn on haunches. Flying changes and half pass allowed in freestyles.

Grade IV = long arena, equivalent to level 4, medium and extended paces, half pass, pirouettes, simple changes. Flying changes allowed in freestyle.

No Grade V is contested at this level and is not included in any of the Para Championships.

PE Competition

All riders who want to compete in Para-Equestrian must:

- Be a "Full Classification" or hold a "Provisional Classification"
- Be a full Financial member of ESNZ - \$60 per year
- Ride a horse which is ESNZ registered - \$65 per year
- Use the Orange ID discs if using any "Compensating Aids"



- Carry their "Classification ID Cards" at all times

PE athletes may compete in Able-Bodies Dressage NZ classes using their compensating aids listed on their FEI or ESNZ PE ID card. They should submit a copy of either their FEI or ESNZ Para-Equestrian ID card stating allowable Compensating Aids with their entry form. This card should also be shown to the Judge at C, and others as requested.

PE in your Area

PE is a fairly new sport with a small number of competitors at present. Because of this it is not viable to run our own separate competitions instead we work with Dressage NZ who very kindly let us incorporate our competitions with theirs.

Dressage NZ has 20 ESNZ Area Regions with groups so there is likely to be a dressage group near you. Check their websites and schedules to see what classes they have.

Many dressage groups offer Para Equestrian classes already and many who don't are keen to do so. If your local group does not already offer Para classes and you would like them to run them, contact your Rider Representative who can contact the group for you and advise them on how it can work.

Most importantly as Para Riders - as we are so small, it is up to the Para Riders of NZ to promote the sport in a positive way and to help with its growth by working on organising committees, engaging new riders and supporting those events who make an effort to incorporate Para.

With no entries there will be no competitions and there will be no sport.

Competition Definitions

Most dressage groups will schedule at least two PE classes. All PE classes are Graded unless stated, therefore all PE riders and their horses must be registered with ESNZ. See the definitions below:

National	Open to Grades Ia – V riding a Para National test for your Grade.
FEI	Open to Grades Ia – IV riding a Para FEI test for your Grade.
TOC	Means "Test of Choice". Example Para TOC. Means riding which ever test you wish for your Grade
GOC	"Grade of Choice". Very rarely at local or practice competition you would be able to ride a test from a different grade of your choosing. Now the National tests have been introduced this has nearly been phased out.

H/C	"Hors Concours". You can ride in another grade or if you are not eligible but your result will not be counted.
Non-Graded	Open to any PE rider who is a community member of ESNZ only. Does not count for grading points.
Training	Same conditions as Non-Graded
Grading	Results count for Grading points. FEI classes earn double points compared to National classes

Scoring at PE Competition

Unless stated, at local competitions and many regional champs the Grades will all compete against each other. This makes for a better competition instead of only having 1 or 2 riders in their own class.

The riders will do the same version of the test for their grade and the results will be determined by the final percentages.

Therefore a Grade Ia who has a more severe disability has an easier test in a short arena than a Grade IV who has the least amount of disability but rides in a long arena and has a much harder test.

Example: Class 19 – Para National 02 2014

Arena is shortened to 40 x 20m

- Rider 1 is Grade II and rides ESNZ II **202** 2014. Scores 62.2%
- Rider 2 is Grade Ib and rides ESNZ Ib **102** 2014. Score 62.0%

Arena is lengthened to 60 x 20m

- Rider 3 and 4 are Grade III and ride ESNZ III **302** 2014. Scores 58.9% and 64.5%
- Rider 5 is Grade IV and rides ESNZ IV **402** 2014. Scores 60.1%

Results: 1st = rider 4 on 64.5%. 2nd = rider 1 on 62.2%. 3rd = rider 2 on 62.0%. 4th = rider 5 on 60.1%

At Nationals and HOY each Grade normally has its own Championship with a Grade Champion and Reserve.

Para-Equestrian Pathways - from Grassroots to High Performance

Love to Ride

- Ride at home
- RDA
- Pony Club
- Riding clubs/ groups

Begin Dressage

- Compete at non-graded dressage days
- Pony Club dressage competitions or Riding clubs/ groups
- Get lessons by a dressage coach who can work with your disability and start learning dressage. There are plenty of coaches in NZ who specialise in Para and working with your disability

Classification

- Contact Vicky Melville to discuss your disability. Send your medical files etc and then arrange a date to do the physical. Vicky travels to the NI several times a year
- A "Provisional Classification" can be used for 12 months if you cannot be fully classified until a later date. This means you can start competing but may not have the correct profile.

Join ESNZ

- Become a full financial member of ESNZ. Cost: \$60 per 12 months
- Register your horse with ESNZ to compete in Para-Equestrian. Cost: \$65 per 12 months.

National Level

- Start competing in the National tests for your Grade if your local dressage group offers Para classes.
- If they don't already run Para classes contact your Para Rider Rep or join your groups committee and offer your help!

NZ FEI Level

- Once you feel capable start competing at your dressage group in the FEI tests
- Continue your lessons with your coach.
- Compete at the Para Island Championships, the Para Nationals and Horse of the Year

FEI International

- Be classified by two FEI Classifier's, one being from another country for your FEI Classification
- Once reaching scores of 70% consistently you may be offered the chance to compete in Australia at a CPEDI (FEI Category -Para Equestrian Dressage International).

High Performance

- Be named on the ESNZ High Performance squad
- Reach High Performance NZ qualification scores and requirements to be considered for selection to represent NZ.

Represent NZ at the Paralympic Games or World Equestrian Games

Contacts

Website: www.nzequestrian.org.nz

All information, resources under the Para Equestrian tab

Facebook: www.facebook.com/esnzparaequestrian

Like us for notifications on clinics, schedules, show updates and information or contact us through Facebook Messenger.

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Competition Schedules:

Most shows in NZ use Equestrian Entries. An online show management and scoring system www.evoevents.co.nz or visit the website.