



CAPABILITIES NECESSARY TO EARNING AN ECP YEH COACH/INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE OR AN ECP YEH PROFESSIONAL HORSE TRAINER CERTIFICATE, BRONZE LEVEL

Young Event Horses (YEHs) are defined as horses at ages 4 and 5. ECP-certified YEH Instructors teach and ECP-certified YEH Professional Trainers ride/train YEHs with the following goals and skills as the bases of their work as equestrian professionals.

WITH RESPECT TO ESTABLISHING THE BASIC SKILLS OF A YEH WHEN BEING RIDDEN

ECP-certified YEH Instructors and YEH Professional Trainer competently assess and describe a young event horse's conformation, condition, temperament, and physical development/maturity, including apparent strengths and weaknesses. They recognize unsoundnesses, conformation faults, injuries, blemishes, lack of muscular development. They are able to age a horse by its teeth.

They assess and describe the young event horse's three gaits, including each gait's correctness or faults. They perceive the current level of the horse's training and determine why and how they will make improvements, both in the present moment and in the longer term. What is their training plan for this horse, having assessed it? They base this plan on the horse's current acceptance of the bit, aids, and rider weight; quality of transitions; degree of suppleness; straightness; apparent trainability.

They describe and can justify their selection and use of equipment – tack, bit, and boots, including gadgets or training aids and their use of those, if any, in the training of young horses.

ECP-certified YEH Instructors and YEH Professional Trainers demonstrate through their words, their teaching, and/or their ridden training that they understand the progression of training that will put the horse on the aids; they demonstrate by their instruction and/or riding that they have a calm, insightful, effective, progressively educational, and classical system of training the young horse to accept the leg and hand and to respond appropriately and willingly to the meaning of those aids. They are able and know when to be patient and/ or flexible with a YEH. They select and use a progression of exercises and movements that make developmental sense for each horse, including the effective and humane handling of resistances and issues of temperament. These choices must be relative and within the context of the current age and developmental level of each horse with whom they are working.

WITH RESPECT TO INTRODUCING THE YOUNG EVENT HORSE TO JUMPING

ECP-certified YEH Instructors and ECP- certified YEH Professional Trainers are able to assess the YEH over fences, as follows. They perceive the YEH's current attitude toward ground poles and jumping, both in general and relative to the horse's current stage and standard of training, which they are able to detect



by close observation. Perceiving qualities like YEH nervousness, resistance, or aggressiveness influences the choice of approaches the YEH instructor or YEH professional trainer selects for the jump training of each individual YEH horse. They assess the shape of the horse over a fence, even a small one. Is there a good bascule or does the horse jump hollow and flat? Is hollow and flat the result of weakness/greenness or poor training? They are able, intellectually and in practice, to connect correct and successful training for rideability and throughness with the YEH's ability to make a good shape over a fence.

These ECP-certified YEH Instructors and YEH Professional Trainers are aware of and use appropriately different types of fences, and they know how to build them correctly and in an inviting way. They demonstrate in their every day instructing and/or ridden training a thorough knowledge of correct distances. They know how to alter these distances related to the heights of the fences and their goals for a YEH's development. They have extensive knowledge about various jumping exercises and gymnastic grids, as well as about when and for what purpose to make use of them.

They are familiar and know how to handle jumping faults – like, poor shape over fences, stopping, running out, aggressive or timid approach to fences, lack of straightness. They are able to clearly articulate and demonstrate how they approach and deal with these issues.

Finally, ECP-certified YEH Instructors and Professional Trainers have a suitable training plan for various stages of the horse's development, and they recognize that YEHs vary in their mental and physical development, with some YEHs taking longer than others. With all YEHs, they know that there must be a progressive and consistent system of training that avoids overfacing the YEH while jumping.

Here are YEH ridden training basics before commencing jump training.

- The YEH should be rideable; equally turnable and bendable left and right; responsive to the Go and Stop aids.
- The YEH should adhere to straight and curved lines when ridden correctly.
- The YEH should be ridden to a fence on the aids and in a balance and outline appropriate for that individual horse and its current way-of-going. Ideally, all horses before and during the jumping should be relaxed and moving in both directions similarly and evenly, and without rushing, stalling, or resisting.
- Use of ground lines is recommended for better initial jumping efforts. Use of wings or rails as wings is recommended also – to promote a YEH's understanding of the task at hand, as well as the YEH's honesty. Presence of other horses, also jumping, can be helpful.

Commencement with jumping includes, appropriate to each YEH, gradual exposure at walk/trot/canter to the following:

- Single poles here and there
- Several distance-regulated poles on ground -- on straight lines and on big curved lines

- Low/tiny fences including cavalletti and naturals like logs, initially; wider fences when appropriate, and narrower (left-to-right) when appropriate; low bounces when appropriate.
 - Other kinds of obstacles, low and inviting, both painted and natural
 - Angled single fences
 - Related fences on straight lines and curved lines
 - Short courses, including turns
 - Water crossings and low banks up and down
 - Tiny ditches starting, perhaps, with two parallel poles on ground close enough to step or jump over with one effort, far enough apart to begin to resemble the width of a ditch.
-

With respect to ECP-certified YEH professional trainers, specifically. These individuals are confident because their position on a YEH is balanced, effective, independent, and secure. They know that a weak or ineffective position is not acceptable. Their experience-based judgments about YEHs and methods of positive training allow them to safely approach, handle from the ground, and mount a young horse with whom they have no prior familiarity. They are able to warm up that horse in a logical, progressive, safe manner – in keeping with the principles stated above. They are able to ride a YEH alone or with other horses. They are able to handle resistances, napping, and temperament issues in a positive and developmentally effective manner. They have shown via their history of training YEHs that they understand and have implemented developmentally appropriate principles and practices with the horses they have trained at ages 4 and 5. Except in rare circumstances, they are able to effect some performance improvement in a YEH during a single ride, providing an observer with the incentive to send a YEH for ridden training to that professional trainer.

Note: If a YEH professional trainer has not yet trained at least 6 YEHs at ages 4 and 5 or would like to expand and deepen his/her experience with the ridden training of YEHs, that individual may intern for a period of time with a willing ECP-certified YEH professional trainer. The list of “ECP-Certified YEH Professional Trainers and ECP-Certified YEH Instructors” will be available on the USEA website (www.useventing.com). Names will be starred of those certified YEH professional trainers who are willing to accept interns.

For ECP information and guidance, the *ECP Standards Booklet, 3rd edition* should be consulted as another significant resource for candidate and already-certified YEH Instructors and YEH Professional Trainers.

Level I and II instructing standards material presented under “Dressage and Jumping Instructional Standards” (found on pp. 10 - 20) is relevant to the ridden training of YEHs as well as, of course, to the instruction of YEH ridden training.

Study also the *Standards Booklet* sections on “Teaching Theory and Practice Standards, including Coaching,” “Horse and Stable

Management Standards,” and “Professionalism and Safety/Medical Issues.” These topics are the subjects of ECP Assessment written and hands-on tests for all ECP certificates, including ECP’s YEH certificates.

Finally, utilize the *Standards Booklet’s* “ECP Glossary of Terms” to review formal descriptions of dressage terms. There you will find definitions written by USEF, USPC, USDF, FEI, and GNEF (German National Equestrian Federation).

Content provided by Mary D’Arcy and Robin Walker

Presented by Sue Hershey April 6, 2017

Revised: October, 2022