



Mila Kate Byer with pony Tuppence, owned by Red Gate Farm.

NCEL Is Changing And Growing

Some New Formats And Rules Enhance The Competitions And Mission

By Nicole Cranford, Senior Administrator

NCEL is made up of a Junior Equitation League (JEL), Short Stirrup Equitation League (NCSSEL), and the most experienced riders are slated for the NCEL “A” league. The League is designed to bring in new riders at the JEL level, where they gain their confidence, establish a relationship with their coach/barn, and acquire solid healthy riding habits during fall and winter months when new riders tend to hunker down inside.

Barns looking to add supplemental riding options to their services have found that the NCEL league provides an affordable option to beginner riders and families just starting to understand the horse show world. It also offers an educational foundation for riders who hope to progress to National Level competition, by giving them the opportunity to compete with local barns and riders.

NCEL is not intended to compete with other leagues such as the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA). It can be a feeder option into nationally-recognized leagues and provide barns a way to prepare their students to be competitive at the all levels. How else do you get better at showing, than showing?

NCEL’s unique approach to the show experience is in its design as a “coaching league.” Coaches are allowed to provide limited instruction to their riders from the rail, and in JEL, coaches may remain in the ring during the lowest level classes. Accredited judges are asked to provide detailed rider feedback. This personalized coaching style provides young riders with the support they need when riding at unknown barns and on unfamiliar horses.

NCEL’s beginner Junior Equitation Leagues (JEL), is designed to support barns by waiving registration fees. There are five rider levels, and coaches have a high level of control over the type of horses their team members may ride at a meet. For example, if a rider draws a horse that is either too quick or too difficult, JEL rules (as well as NCSSEL, and NCEL) allow horses to be changed without penalty to the rider in order to safely match him/her with the most suitable horse. After all, this league is more like a family.

Over the years NCEL has adapted with the times, and this year is no different. We have done away with the requirement that a barn must have access to an indoor arena, as we can now begin the season early enough to hold some outdoor meets. Additionally, NCEL has adopted a Program Ride Equitation format resembling a dressage-like flat test for all three Leagues (NCEL, NCSSEL, and JEL) in lieu of the traditional hunt seat flat class.

The Program Ride test comprises a set series of memorized movements performed in an enclosed arena. The test is scored on each movement with the overall harmony and precision of the test taken into consideration. Riders should be accurate and stylish while using invisible aids and trying to make their rounds seem completely effortless.