



# Half-halt



The Newsletter for the Southeastern Chapter of the Virginia Dressage Association

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From Dressage today

## The Golden Rules of the Dressage Warm-up Arena



The warm-up arena at a show can be a happening place, but if you don't know your way around, it can quickly become a scary one. Savvy riders share the ring with others who may be distracted by the antics of their horses or the directives of their instructors. Some riders may boldly think they own the warm-up arena and act as bullies while others may simply be petrified with show nerves. The more prepared you are by knowing a few common rules, the more smoothly you will be able to warm up your horse and get ready for your test.

Fortunately, good warm-up techniques, like any skill, can be learned. Did you know that the U.S. Dressage Federation (USDF) publishes an official protocol for warming up at a show? This should be required reading for all competitors ([usdf.org](http://usdf.org)). The following are tips, insights and rules for the warm-up arena at a show from instructors who have taken many students to shows over the years: Bill Woods, Sarah Martin, Jessica Rattner and Tracey Lert give sound advice for every competitor.

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## **Follow the Basic Code of Conduct**

**Riders should pass each other left hand to left hand.** This is the first, most elemental rule riders must observe, say the experts. If you are traveling to the right and you see a horse coming toward you, steer your horse off the track so that you will pass with your left hands nearest to each other. This rule is easy to remember if you have your driver's license since the same rule applies when driving (in the United States, at least). Circles are an exception. If you are circling, stay to the inside of oncoming riders. If you are passing another rider who is circling, you can stay your course on the rail. It's not necessary to try to thread through her circle in order to pass left hand to left hand.

**Slower gaits take the inside track.** As Florida author, judge and instructor Bill Woods succinctly puts it: "If you are walking, whether you're going to do a Prix St. Georges test or Intro, for heaven's sake, get off the track!" Look up, he insists. This simple habit is critical to harmony in any warm-up arena. If you are studying your horse's neck, not only are you not looking where you are going, you are also probably lost in your thoughts.

**The warm-up arena is for work.** If you need to take a break for any reason, exit the warm-up arena. Parking your horse on the rail will cause traffic-flow problems for the rest of the riders trying to get ready for their tests. You will encounter all kinds of good reasons to stop—to strategize with your trainer, to chat with a friend about your last test or to put on your coat and get the last-minute boot buff. Whatever the reason, just take it outside the gate, and make sure you aren't blocking the entrance or exit either.

**Control your whip.** Just the sound of a whip can disturb other horses. Horses need their personal space. If you are close enough to touch another horse with your whip, you are too close. Keep at least one horse's length away from other horses in all directions.

"Treat every horse like they might kick," advises Jessica Rattner, rider and head trainer at Devonwood Equestrian Center. "You never know when a horse will decide that close is too close and fire out. It's just better to be safe than sorry!"

### **Prepare for the Pre-test Warm-up**

Be aware of the kind of message your horse might be sending and receiving from other horses. For example, a Friesian coming up behind someone in a thundering canter might make another horse think he is running away from something and out of control, which is contagious. A young horse seeing upper-level movements for the first time might interpret them wrongly. A passage is definitely a sign of an excited horse. Half passing toward a horse might seem to be an attack. To get your horse more comfortable with the show experience, make sure you school him with other horses.

Sarah Martin, an instructor based in Colorado, prepares her students by holding a mock show warm-up lesson with up to 15 horses. She directs the riders in an orchestrated set of test patterns. "It's a wonderful tool," she explains. "In this way, the experienced horses provide an example of how to behave for the younger horses. The riders have an opportunity to learn how to space themselves and control the tempo."

Martin advises her students to watch the warm-up arena for a few moments before entering. She says a rider must learn to read the arena much like a raft guide must learn to read the water. Which way is the current flowing? An observant rider can pick out which horses are high and unpredictable, which riders look like a deer in the headlights and who is quietly doing their work. Some riders may be circling at one end so that they can hear their coaches. Others might be looking down and only dimly aware of their surroundings. Use this information to know where to direct your horse and when to do your movements. When you enter the warm-up ring, Martin suggests staying toward the middle at a walk to give your horse time to adjust to the tension and hum of activity.

Since dressage movements can take a horse in any direction, it can be difficult to predict which way another rider is going. In these cases, it's OK to speak up. "Sometimes a simple 'heads up' or 'on your left' is enough," says Rattner. She also suggests, "If you want to take a particular line, declaring your intentions can help other riders plan." Martin agrees but cautions, "Shouting out your next move does not absolve you from watching out for other riders, and endlessly narrating your intentions just adds to the overall confusion of the warm-up."



**Please be aware that for all schooling shows and clinics sponsored by SVDA - a CURRENT negative coggins must be received or you will not be allowed to participate. SVDA must submit a report listing all horses, owners and coggins accession numbers to the Va Dept of Agriculture for every sponsored event. We can not make exceptions. So please get your coggins drawn early to allow processing time so that we don't have to refuse your participation on the day of a show or clinic.**



**Kathy Rowse**  
 USDF "S" Judge  
 USDF "L" Faculty Member  
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VADA Year End Award

Winners: Pinky Hipp, Charlene Jensen, Karen Barnard, Dahlia Jensen. Other winners not present were Mary Barzak and Sandy Toby

Some thoughts from **Adequan USDF FEI-Level Trainers' Conference** by Jodi Jones Lees

These are SOME of the thoughts that I came away with from the 2023 USDF Trainer's Symposium with David Hunt and Henk van Bergen:

🐾 You must create a MENTAL partnership with your horse - your horse must ACCEPT and trust the balance and connection that the rider establishes.

🐾 We want to be able to influence the balance of the horse - a combination of tempo and position defines the balance.

🐾 Only a horse in balance can be trained. It is the rider's job to define the tempo and the contact which develops the position which develops the balance.

🐾 Before we can influence the position of the horse, the horse must be accepting of the bit and the aids.

🐾 Practice GOOD and CORRECT transitions - quality trumps quantity.

🐾 Dressage is the systematic development of the natural abilities of the horse (Henk).

🐾 The rider must be the leader in the partnership - influence the quality and do not be a passenger (Henk).

🐾 There are three possibilities where an exercise goes wrong:

- the horse does not understand the question
- the horse understands but cannot physically do the request
- the horse understands and is able but refuses

These can all LOOK the same but it takes three completely different approaches to solve the issue! (Henk)

🐾 The back legs follow the front legs and the front legs follow the mouth (David Hunt)

🐾 The easiest way to ruin a horse is to be afraid that you are going to ruin your horse. (Henk)

🐾 Lilo's 3 R's:

relaxation, response, respect

🐾 The rider's perception of a canter pirouette is much more difficult and complicated than the reality - a pirouette is a small canter circle and the canter must be maintained!

🐾 Ride the horse, not the movement (David Hunt).

🐾 Acceptance brings relaxation. Relaxation does not bring acceptance (David Hunt)

🐾 Progress happens on the edge - it is a fine line between good and wrong and you must work to help the horse find the correct answer without being afraid to ask.

🐾 Balance is the balance that the RIDER chooses.

🐾 It is not only where you want the horse to go but more importantly HOW you want him to go (David Hunt)

This is a basic summary of some of the concepts presented very consistently throughout the Symposium.

Truth be told, this is just a drop in the bucket of the collective knowledge shown over two days by the instructors, riders and horses.

## SVDA 2023 Calendar

### Schooling Show Schedule

Date	Location	Judge	Open	Close
03/26/23	Kelly Coyne Dressage	Annmari Ingersoll 'L'*	02/27/23	03/13/23
04/23/23	Harmonia	Elise Enoch "L Graduate	03/27/23	04/10/23
05/21/23	Back Bay Farm	CANDIDATE"	04/24/23	05/08/23
06/18/23	River Birch Farm	Jane Kelly	05/22/23	06/05/23
07/09/23	Willow Creek Equestrian	Margetet Little 'r' Wanda	06/12/23	06/26/23
07/30/23	Seahorse Run	Escobar 'L' Kris Hamilton	07/03/23	07/17/23
08/27/23	TBA	'r' Robyn Nunnally 'L'*	07/31/23	08/14/23
09/24/23	River Birch Farm	Donna Gatchell 'L'*	08/28/23	09/11/23
10/29/23	<b>SVDA Championship Show</b> Wakefield 4H Center	TBA TBA TBA	@C @B Ring 2	10/02/23 10/16/23

\*L Graduate with Distinction

### Sanctioned schooling shows

#### Wakefield Airfield 4-H Center

05/20/23

07/15-16/23

08/19-20/23

10/28/23

**Crescent Bay Pony club** held at Northwest River Park

03/12/23

04/30/23

06/04/23

08/05/23

10/01/23

#### Deep Creek Stables

### Licensed Show 2023

3/05.06/23 **Raleigh Winter Dressage**, Raleigh NC

4/01-02/23 **March Magic Dressage**, Raeford, NC

4/23.24/23 **Primetime Dressage** – Raeford, NC

4/30 - 5/01 **Dressage at the Meadow I & II**, Doswell, VA

## The Golden Rules of the Dressage Warm-up Arena Con't

"Let's start with responsibility," suggests Woods. "If you can steer, you are supposed to be more generous and self-aware than those who cannot. If you are a princess, you get no dispensation. Make your tempis around the helpless novice riders, not through them!" Martin teaches her students to ride defensively, no matter who else is in the warm-up. "I do not differentiate between green and experienced," she explains. "Advanced horses can also sometimes be claustrophobic or very high. I read the energy level of the horses around me, and I avoid the high energy ones, no matter what their level."

Everyone agrees that if you are experienced and/or are riding a well-trained confident horse, you are in the best position to watch out for other riders and set up your movements in the right places. "I think it's up to advanced riders to keep their antennae up," says Tracey Lert, a longtime instructor in California.

### **Using Wireless Headsets**

In the last few years, wireless communication devices have changed the way riders warm up at a show. The devices function like walkie-talkies complete with headsets, thereby allowing coaches to discreetly instruct their riders without yelling across the arena. "I like them," says Lert. "It makes the atmosphere calmer and it's more centering for the rider. She doesn't have to hug one corner of the ring in order to hear her coach."

Martin appreciates them, too, but is quick to add that the warm-up is not the place for a riding lesson. She often finds that she is coaching several students at once, so she will give her newbie rider the headset while offering an occasional comment to the others as they ride by. "In general, I do very little shouting from the side, although a loud 'good!' can help to pump up a timid rider or boost the confidence of a rider who is about to enter the show ring."

Rattner notes that the wireless systems make it more difficult for riders to keep track of everyone. "You don't have the benefit of hearing an instructor tell her student to do a half pass. And if you are wearing a headset, you may find it harder to hear someone right behind you. Make sure you take note of who is 'plugged in' and who is not," she suggests.

The wireless systems do have some disadvantages, Woods points out. "I appreciate the notion of decorum and golf-commentator-like whispered tones, but one downside to headsets is that each student retreats into a self-oriented cocoon with little regard for anyone or anything outside her sphere. Programmed to follow her coach's orders, the rider titanically plows along, oblivious to whatever icebergs other coaches are unwittingly throwing in her path. One advantage of the old aural system of coaching aloud was that since each trainer could hear what the others were saying, each could steer his students into uncontested zones, free of hazards and hindrances. On the bright side," he adds wryly, "the prevalence of techie devices spares the rest of us from the guy on the sideline who, instead of actually coaching, insists on shouting arcane bits of dressage philosophy so the rest of us will acknowledge his brilliance. I prefer to be a minimalist. If your student doesn't understand the heavy stuff by now, trying to flood them with it moments before their test isn't going to do them any good."

Woods does acknowledge one obscure benefit to the wireless communication systems with this recollection: "I appreciated one kid's approach to TMI [too much information] which I observed at a wintertime Florida show. An advanced Young Rider was being prepped for her test by not one but by both of her parents—well-known professionals.

Each was wearing a headset and standing at an opposite end of the schooling ring. North end: Dad's advice. South end: Mom's. I watched as, overwhelmed with their input, the child discreetly took her reins in one hand and slipped the switch on her belt to off. Problem solved!"

### **Use Warm-Up Time Effectively**

The warm-up arena is not the place for a last-minute review of your test. Not only is it difficult to navigate a test pattern with a ring full of riders, it is not the best preparation for your horse either. "Trust the training you did at home," advises Lert. "Use your warmup time to get your horse through and to test his responsiveness to the aids."

Lert learned the secret of building a horse's confidence from her father, Peter Lert, instructor, competitor and winner of the USDF Lifetime Achievement award. (Peter Lert passed away in January. See *Arena*, p. 18.) He began his career as a jumper trainer. "Show-jumping riders use the warmup to build a horse's confidence so he believes he can jump anything," says Lert. "I see a lot of dressage riders make the mistake of creating anxiety in their horses by drilling the stuff that is not working. You don't want your horse thinking, Oh no, Mother is upset! It's especially important to finish your warm-up with something your horse does really well, so he will enter the show ring in a good frame of mind."

The warm-up arena can be an electric place, and for an inexperienced horse it can be overwhelming. If you suspect that your horse might act up, Martin suggests riding him out first or warming him up on the longe line. Recognized shows usually provide a designated longeing area. "Of course, no one can stop a young horse from bucking and spooking completely," she says, "but taking your fractious horse into the warm-up puts other riders on green horses at risk."

When another horse in the warmup arena just loses it, or if a rider gets thrown from her horse, everyone agrees that you should stand as still as possible and wait until the situation is resolved. Lert tells her students, "Just halt and wait for things to get under control." She feels that it is safer to stay on and not dismount.

Martin encourages her students to dismount so that they can steady their horses. "The safest place is on your two feet," she says, adding, "Don't try to be the hero and catch the loose horse. You could cause another situation when your horse and the other one start kicking and squealing."

Speaking of heroics, Woods recalls, "Once I was on an especially obnoxious Thoroughbred, trying to get him ready for his first Training Level test. As he tried a sudden, uncontrolled dash for the exit, another professional on a massive warmblood blocked his path and cheerfully offered, 'It's OK. If you have to, run him into me!'" While we can't recommend this kind of chivalry, the spirit of goodwill toward other competitors is one of the best things you can bring to any warm-up arena. "Remember that everyone at a show is probably stressed," says Rattner. "Polite riding can keep you and your ring mates from getting further stressed out. Niceness often perpetuates itself."

*Old Mill Dressage*



*Suffolk, VA*

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ezium

**Sandy Toby**

USDF Silver/Bronze  
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"L" Graduate W/  
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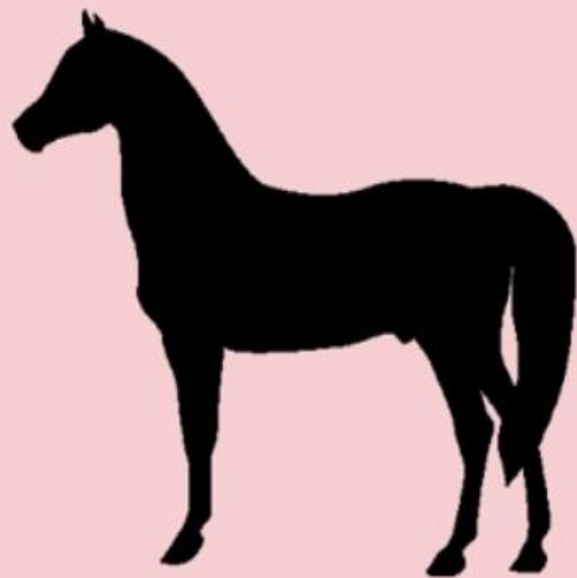
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## New Grants for U.S. Military Members and Dependents Announced

We are honored to announce the new Military Grant Fund, established by Colonel David and Sue Bender of Beech Island, SC.

TDF's Military Grant Fund will offer \$1,000 grants for dressage-related education to riders of any level who have served, or are currently serving, in the United States military and their dependents. The Fund is open to all branches of the military to include active duty, reserves, and veterans. Amateur or youth riders, including para-dressage riders, are welcome to apply.

Sue Bender shared, *"These individuals are constantly giving to this country in many ways, sometimes with little ability to concentrate on their personal goals. We hope that this Fund will ease the financial burden of dressage training and will allow recipients to take the time to focus on their riding goals."*



[Learn More](#)

## VADA BOARD MEETING MINUTES 3-02-23 VIA ZOOM

**Participating:** Sheli King (VN); Alison Douglas (Central); Robyn Nunally (SVDA); Angie Stanaway (NE); Muffin Smith (SWVADA); Nancy Doody (C'ville); Laura Nelson (SWVADA); Anne Draine (NEVADA); Kathleen Kelly (SWVADA); Karen Rice (Fred); Sandy Monolo (NEVADA), Annette Hildabrand (ShenVADA); Diann Carpenter (NOVA) and members Rachel Rice, Lisa Beckwith, and Diane Boyd

**Minutes:** Laura Nelson made the motion and Anne Draine seconded that we approve the January minutes, and everyone concurred except Annette Hildabrand who abstained.

**Treasurer's Report:** Via email Jessie reported that our combined balance is \$183,622. This includes all the banquet expenses and the Purple Book. The banquet had an income of \$4,923 with \$2,573 coming in from the silent auction. The Year End expenses were \$10,614 leaving a net expense for the program of \$5,691.

**General Chapter Matters:** Sheli discussed the fiduciary responsibilities of the board members to protect the assets of the club as well as providing financial transparency to our members. She encouraged any chapter who needed guidance in this regard to reach out so other chapters could share their experiences with various account tracking and show financial reporting programs. Also discussed was a common term to be used by all chapters for members who join multiple chapters. One is their primary and the other is an affiliation membership. Sheli will review the by-laws to see how membership is described and whether any other changes are needed and report back.

**Annual Awards Banquet-** Feedback from Nancy Doody and others who attended and were on the call was positive. The committee will be meeting sometime in March for a wrap up and start planning for next year. Nancy Doody is the committee chair and anyone interested in joining the committee should contact her.

**2024 Purple Book:** We are forming a committee to brainstorm how to put together the online format, talk about security, etc. Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact Sheli. As with any committee, this counts towards volunteer hours. Diann Carpenter and Nancy Doody have already volunteered.

**2024 Clinic:** This is another opportunity for members to join a committee and earn volunteer hours. Those interested should contact Sheli. First order of business is to establish a date and a facility.

**DAL Update:** Dates are July 14-16. Dianne Boyd reported that we have an onsite vet confirmed, and awards and hospitality will once again be outside in the same location as last year. The breed show judge will be Kristy Wysoki and she's working on securing the other judges.

**GAIG Update:** Dates are Oct 5-8. Dianne reported that she's working on securing the officials; some of whom will be new to us. She has already gotten Bill Warren. VHC has no plans to upgrade the northern arena so it will again be schooling. New this year is that freestyles will be split by division. She also told us that the show falls on a parents weekend so make sure all your members know to book hotel rooms early as they will be in short supply.

**AOB:** The Region 1 meeting is March 9<sup>th</sup>. If you are a GMO/PMO rep, please be on the call. Voting for the locations of the Region 1 Championship (does NOT have to be hosted by a GMO) and the CBLM (does have to be hosted by a GMO) will take place. Laura Nelson asked how other chapters handle schooling shows that are at farms in the area but not run by the local chapter when members of a chapter like to participate and perhaps use the scores for local chapter awards. Chapter reps discussed how their individual chapters handle.

**Chapter Updates: PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE SENDING INFO TO NANCY DOODY FOR THE WEBSITE**

**Central-** Clinic with Bruno Greber March 11<sup>th</sup> at Oakdale Equestrian Center. Decades of Dressage Schooling Show on March 18<sup>th</sup> at Saddlebrook.

**Charlottesville-** They are having an “Up the Levels” clinic with Carter Bass for the new tests April 1-2, 2023. The first day will be for levels 1-4 and the second day will be FEI. The clinic will be in Afton and open to everyone. April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> they have having a MFS clinic with Terry Gallo at Stave Mill Farm in Esmont. They are also having a Michael Bragdell Clinic at Afton Stables April 26-27.

**Fredericksburg** – They are planning a clinic with Jane Kelly date tbd.

**NEVADA** – They are going to have 9 schooling shows this year and upcoming clinics with Nancy Lowey and Jane Kelly.

**NOVA** – On March 18<sup>th</sup> they will be having a fix a test clinic with Donna Gatchell and a schooling show at Morven on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Licensed show on April 8<sup>th</sup>. June 10-11 is their Summer Dressage Festival. July 26-29 is their dressage camp.

**ShenVADA** – They are having a clinic April 22 at Lighthouse Farm with Rose Pellasic.

**SVDA-** Schooling show March 26<sup>th</sup> at Pleasant Ridge in VA Beach. Also upcoming schooling shows April 23, May 21, June 18, July 9, July 30, Aug 27, Sept 24 and Oct 29.

**Southwest-** On April 23<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup> they are having schooling shows combined with BREA at Green Hill Park.

**NEXT MEETING April 18th AT 8pm**

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Alison Douglas

## **Show schedule for 2023** Dates as of Feb. 3, 2023

### **March**

04/05 **Raleigh Winter Dressage** – Raleigh, NC  
SVDA - Kelly Coyne Dressage, Old Pleasant Ridge  
11/12  
18/19  
25/26

### **April**

01/02 **Springtime Dressage** – Raeford, NC(Cancelled)  
**March Magic Dressage** – Raeford, NC  
08/09 **VADA/NOVA Spring April** – Leesburg.VA  
15/16  
20/23 **Tryon Spring Dressage I** – Mill Spring, NC  
22/23 **Prime Time Dressage** – Raeford, NC  
SVDA - Harmonia  
29/30 **Dressage at the Meadows I & II** – Doswell, VA

### **May**

06/07 **Tryon Spring Dressage 2** – Mill Spring, NC  
12/13/14 **Dressage in the Sand Hills** – Pinehurst, NC  
13/14 **Raleigh Spring Dressage** – Raleigh, NC  
18/21 **Mid-Atlantic Dressage Festival & Lexington CDI2\* Dressage** – Lexington, VA  
SVAD - Back Bay Farm

27/28 **Whispering Miracles Dressage I & II – Va. Beach, VA**  
**Mayday Dressage – Pinehurst, NC**

**June**

03/04 **Capital Dressage Classic – Raleigh, NC**  
10/11 **Summertime Blues – Pinehurst, NC**  
**VADA/NOVA Summer – Leesburg, VA**  
**Whispering Miracles Dressage I & II – Va. Beach, VA**  
17/18 **VADA-CH Isabel F De Szinay Dressage – Culpeper, VA**  
SVDA - River Birch Farm  
24/25 **Dressage at the Park I & II – Raeford, NC**

**July**

01/02  
08/09 SVDA - Willow Creek Equestrian  
14/15/16 **Dressage at Lexington – Lexington, VA**  
**VADA/NOVA Summer – Leesburg, VA**  
15/16 **Rise ‘n Shine - Pinehurst, NC**  
22/23 **Summer Breeze Dressage – Raeford, NC**  
**Whispering Miracles Dressage I & II – Va. Beach, VA**  
29/30 **Raleigh Summer Dressage I & II – Raleigh, NC**  
SVDA - Seahorse Run

**August**

05/06 **Early Morning Blues – Pinehurst, NC**  
12/13 **\*Tryon Fall Dressage 3 & 4 – Mill Spring, NC**  
19/20  
26/27 **VADA/NOVA Summer Wind down I & II – Leesburg, VA**  
SVDA - TBA

**September**

02/03 **NCDCTA Labor of Love I & II**  
**Cool Down Dressage – Pinehurst, NC**  
09/10 **VADAF Dressage at Rosemont I & II – Spotsylvania, VA**  
**Whispering Miracles Dressage I & II – Va. Beach, VA**  
16/17 **\*Tryon Fall Dressage 1 & 2 – Mill Spring, NC**  
**NCDCTA Harvest Moon Dressage – Raeford, NC**  
23/24 SVDA – River Birch  
30/01

**October**

30/01  
05/08 **Great American Insurance Group – Lexington, VA**  
**Pinehurst Fall Dressage – Pinehurst, NC?**  
14/15 **CBLM - New Jersey Horse Park – Allentown, NJ**  
22/23  
29 **Wakefield Airfield – Wakefield, VA**  
30 **SVDA Schooling Championship Show**

**November**

05/06  
12/13  
19/20  
26/27



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