



USDF

UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

Show Biz, Chapter 4, Finances

Introduction

Because the number of rides that can be scheduled in eight hours is limited, dressage competitions are especially at risk of losing money. Selling advertising and obtaining sponsors help the bottom line. Estimating all expenses will show you how much you should charge for entries, stabling, parking, etc. and how much you will need from donations, advertising, and sponsors. Be sure to calculate the cost of producing a program and parking attendants before going after advertisers.

Income will generally be received from the following (some or all may apply):

- Entries
- Office Fees
- Stabling
- Advertising in program
- Donations
- Sponsors
- Fundraising drives
- Exhibitors' party or other activity charges
- Parking and admittance charges

The total cost of a dressage competition depends on many variables. It may be helpful to review the [USDF Competition Management Checklist](#) to be sure all possible expenses have been factored in.

Budgeting for Officials and Staff: When estimating expenses use sample spreadsheet “Budget for Officials and Workers” to ensure that you have not forgotten anything major. Note that some farriers and veterinarians charge a retainer for being on-call while others may be happy with some advertising in exchange for services.

Some individuals may cover more than one of the positions listed. The secretary may produce the prize list, for example, and the manager may oversee hospitality. At a minimum, the competition should provide workers with free drinks and lunch, invitations to any exhibitor’s parties and, especially if a volunteer, a gift will encourage the worker to continue to support the shows.

All of these considerations must figure into the budget.

Budgeting for all other considerations: The sample spreadsheet “Budget” lists many of the items for which the show is responsible. Local conditions may vary.

The secretary, for example, may provide all office equipment and supplies as part of the agreement with the show. Those expenses would show up on the officials/workers budget. The sound system may be included in the contract with the facility. The show may want to develop a separate tracking system for facility expenses if

the agreement is other than a flat fee. The show may be billed for stalls used, RV hook-ups used, number of haul-ins, specific arenas used (which may be billed at different rates), bedding pre-orders and/or sold during the show, vendor spaces, office spaces used, lights, number of water/drags – be sure to review the contract very carefully. It is not fun to have to pay for haul-ins or RV spaces (as an example) when you have neglected to collect for them from the exhibitor.

Money Management: Budget all items before you start spending money. If you have not had experience with a competition before, talk to other managers to find out what kind of money is involved with the items on the list. Then contact local sources of goods and services and determine average prices. Be sure to save the receipts for tax purposes, whether for your business or for a non-profit.

Once your budget is set, notify all committees and necessary personnel of their spending limits. Encourage anyone obtaining goods and services for the competition to get several estimates for each item. By comparing prices, you may find the same quality item for fewer dollars. Some organizers feel more comfortable with the use of purchase orders so that all expenditures are easily identified.

If it is determined that a certain item cannot be obtained for the amount budgeted, or if anyone goes over budget, the competition manager, licensee and/or show committee should be notified. The manager, licensee and/or show committee must decide if the budget should be increased and determine from where the extra money will come or if alternate goods can be procured.

Profit: The Publicity section also mentions ways to raise money but the most important consideration for management is to keep expenses to a minimum. The following list contains some helpful hints on how to save money.

- Check local hotels and motels. One may give you courtesy rooms for judges or technical delegates if you mention them exclusively in the prize list, reserve rooms for out-of-town exhibitors and/or offer them an ad in the program.
- Do not rent what can be donated--someone may donate their mobile home for the office; a stable may donate a portable arena and letters in exchange for a program ad; a church or private school may donate tables and chairs. Check with local area members to see what services/goods they may provide.
- In the long run, the expense of hiring a successful competition manager and secretary may save money.

Avoid paying fines

- Failure to submit a prize list, insurance certificate, results and/or post competition fees and paperwork to USEF and USDF within the required time frame may result in late fees being assessed on the competition.
- Failure to have proper emergency medical personnel may result in a fine from USEF.
- Other fines can be levied for the violations listed in USEF Rule Book and on the USDF website.
- Additional fees apply when changing competition date or show name after obtaining recognition (USEF and USDF).