

Vermont Summer Festival: Better and Better Each Year

By Lindsay Brock, Jump Media

The Vermont Summer Festival is preparing to celebrate an iconic anniversary. Only a select number of horse shows ever reach the 25-year milestone and, during the 2018 season, the Vermont Summer Festival will be one of them.

Running for six consecutive weeks from July 3 through August 12 at Harold Beebe Farm in East Dorset, VT, the event has grown to be a favorite among riders, trainers, and local spectators alike. The 2018 summer series will continue the tradition of competitive in-ring options to please the hunter, jumper, and equitation rider, as well as an ever-evolving dedication to improvement.



Connecticut rider Cassandra Orpen riding in the competitive hunter ranks aboard Major Key at the Vermont Summer Festival. By Andrew Ryback Photography

A New Era

What was once a tiny horse show held in the parking lot of a ski resort in Killington, VT, the Vermont Summer Festival has evolved into a top summer choice for hunter/jumper riders throughout North America and beyond. Show managers John and Dotty Ammerman have been involved with the Vermont Summer Festival from its early beginnings and have since turned Dorset, VT, into its permanent home.

"We are incredibly proud to be a part of the event during its 25th year," said John Ammerman, who transitioned into the role show's manager after first attending the event in its early days as a judge. "Twenty-five years is a testament to the hard work of the people who organize and run the day-to-day operations. We've experienced quite the evolution and it's an honor for me to see it still growing and thriving after 25 years."

Ammerman likes to think of the Vermont Summer Festival as a destination circuit, and the competitors agree. Nestled in the mountains of Southern Vermont, the circuit has always been so much more than a horse show. With endless entertainment, dining, and legendary shopping opportunities, it has traditionally been wildly popular among families, large training barns, and riders from across the country seeking a true horse show experience with a summer vacation vibe.



U.S. rider Lauren Fischer competing her own Risssoa d'Ag Bois Margot at the 2017 Vermont Summer Festival. By Jump Media

Aside from what competitors love about the Manchester area, they are also drawn to the execution of the horse show itself. Ammerman and his staff are continually dedicated to making Harold Beebe Farm better each year.

"We do not own the property where the show takes place, but we do all the maintenance," he said. "Everything from jumps to benches to sit on are shipped in and the set-up is a process that we have down to a science. We make a huge effort each year to make the grounds and the experience better."

In the spirit of improvement, Ammerman stripped all show and schooling

rings to the base and revived the footing for the 2018 season.

"As soon as the snow was gone in Vermont, we went to work," continued Ammerman, who is a 2011 Show Jumping Hall of Fame inductee. "After removing the old footing, we regraded the surface and added 750 tons of sand, which was mixed with 80,000 pounds of fiber material to create all-new footing."

Ammerman is confident that the footing will be better this summer than it has ever been before, promising an exciting 25th anniversary summer.



Leadline The Vermont Summer Festival offers competition for riders of all ages from leadline to the grand prix. *By Andrew Ryback Photography*



Train The iconic train that passes by Harold Beebe Farm inspired one ring to be aptly named the "Railroad Ring." *By Andrew Ryback Photography*

Same Beloved Circuit

Good footing lends itself to good competition, which is ever-present at the Vermont Summer Festival. Each summer, point chasers and specialized hunter and equitation trainers make their way to Vermont to qualify for prestigious year-end finals.

World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) week welcomes some of the country's top hunter competitors during the third week of competition. After gaining points at member horse shows across the nation, including the Vermont Summer Festival, the top 10 nationally-ranked riders and top six regionally-ranked riders in each category go head-to-head in the WCHR Finals at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in October in Upper Marlboro, MD.

Additionally, weekly \$5,000 3'3" NEHJA Hunter Derby offerings make their return in 2018 with a \$15,000 offering on August 9 during the sixth and final week of competition.

For equitation riders, the Vermont Summer Festival's "Equitation Tuesdays" have developed a reputation as a

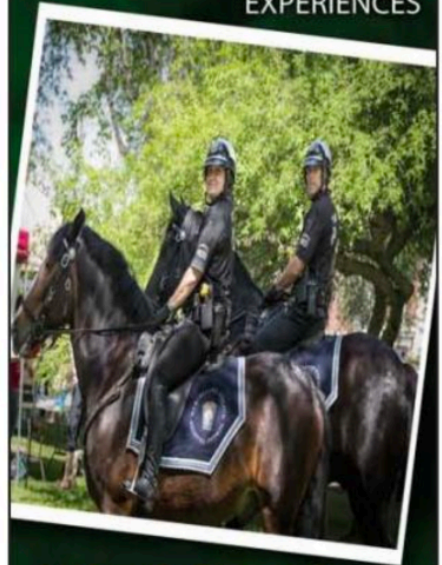
points palooza. Tuesdays are dedicated to equitation classes and give riders several opportunities to qualify for, and accomplish, year-end goals at the nation's top equitation finals.

Saturdays at the Vermont Summer Festival see packed stands thanks to a dedicated local equestrian sport following. The show peaks each week with a \$30,000 Grand Prix, held the first five Saturdays of the six-week circuit, before the season culminates with the \$50,000 Grand Prix on the final weekend. Admission at the Vermont Summer Festival is only charged on Saturdays and Sundays and benefits local Manchester-area charities.

Entering an exciting new era after a quarter of a century of success, changes for the advancement of competitor enjoyment and thrilling sport to top it off, the Vermont Summer Festival is primed to continue its reputation as a North American favorite during the 2018 summer.

Want to find out more about the Vermont Summer Festival? Visit www.vt-summerfestival.com, or find it on Facebook and Instagram.

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