

The Vermont Summer Festival



PHOTO BY ANDREW RYBACK

Morgan Ward and Cypress on their way to one of two hunter derby wins in 2019.

Go North!

The Vermont Summer Festival Offers Horse Showing at its Best

By *Lindsay Brock/Jump Media*

The Vermont Summer Festival has captivated show jumping athletes in the Northeast for almost three decades and has become one of the most popular summer destinations in North America for pony kids, rising grand prix stars, and all riders in between.

Nestled along the Battenkill River just south of the Green Mountain National Forest, picturesque views surround the competition grounds at Harold Beebe Farm, home to the six-week circuit each July and August. The series attracts equestrians from all corners of the United States for dynamic competition spanning the levels from cross-rails to weekly grand prix events.

In case you need a few more reasons to visit the Vermont Summer Festival, running June 30 through Aug. 9, 2020, in East Dorset, Vt., here are three of our favorites:

The Sport

It's a given, but the Vermont Summer Festival serves as the perfect environment to showcase tomorrow's stars with young horses and up-and-coming riders often pocketing the first big wins of their careers at the Vermont Summer Festival. The jumps are big, the riders are eager to win, and the sport will not disappoint!

The Vermont Summer Festival is not only home to firsts, it's also been known to host winning streaks that are rarely seen in our sport.

"I love it in Vermont," says Kevin McCarthy, who hails from Ireland originally and owns and manages the aptly named McCarthy's Pub in his home base of Cazenovia, N.Y. He notably won four out of the six Manchester Designer Outlets Open Welcome Stakes classes in 2019, along with claiming two grand prix victories.

"The results of the hard work done by Vermont Summer Festival management to make this a top show are proven when you



Kirk Webby of New Zealand and Brando du Rouet led the victory gallop for one of six weekly Saturday grand prix events offered throughout the season.

look down the order in these classes," continued McCarthy. "I'm proud of what I was able to accomplish against the riders who were there."

The \$10,000 Manchester Designer Outlets Open Welcome Stake is held each Thursday, and a \$30,000 Grand Prix takes



Hunter riders like Amy Momrow, pictured riding G. Eleven, are treated to weekly hunter derbies at the Vermont Summer Festival culminating with the \$15,000 NEHJA Hunter Derby on Thur., Aug. 6.

place the first five Saturdays of the six-week circuit before culminating with the \$50,000 Grand Prix on Saturday, Aug. 8. Additionally, jumper riders compete season-long for the \$10,000 Open Jumper Rider Bonus, presented by World Equestrian Center, to be divided amongst the three top-scoring open jumper competitors during the circuit.

Hunters will also have their opportunity to soak up the spotlight and be showcased in the \$5,000 3'3" NEHJA Hunter Derbies each Thursday, highlighted by a \$15,000 finale on Thur., Aug. 6.

When to go: Make it a Saturday outing! Purchase a ticket for one of the weekly grand prix events that benefit local Vermont charities and join the conversation by using tags #VSF2020 and #summerinvermont on social media.

Vermont Living

When Vermont Summer Festival exhibitors are asked what they love most about spending their summers in the mountains of Manchester, Vt., their first response is almost always, "the views, and the town!"

While the location seems picture perfect, the process of finding Harold Beebe Farm stemmed from good business rather than a knack for finding panoramic views. A quarter of a century ago,

the Vermont Summer Festival sprouted up as a tiny horse show in the parking lot of a popular ski resort in Killington, Vt.. The show felt like a carnival with everything from footing to bathrooms trucked in, and it attracted riders from neighboring states and Canadian provinces.

After some location hopping, the Vermont Summer Festival settled in East Dorset, Vt., to better serve the largest concentration of its exhibitors, which were in the Manchester area. It was then that the Vermont Summer Festival as we know it today was born and began attracting competitors from far and wide.

"I am proud to say that after almost 30 years, we are still here and continuing to thrive," said Vermont Summer Festival Show Manager John Ammerman, who saw the show celebrate its 25-year anniversary in 2018. "The show has experienced quite the evolution, but

my staff and I have poured countless hours into the current location and are very proud of what it has become."

When to go: Dine out! Take a stroll through the streets of Manchester, Vt., and indulge in the restaurant options. Also, be sure to pick up a Manchester Designer Outlets coupon book in the horse show office for even better deals. Finally, stay the night!



Ireland's Kevin McCarthy claimed top prize in the \$10,000 Open Jumper Rider Bonus, presented by World Equestrian Center, in 2019.

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From the historic charm of The Dorset Inn and Barrows House to the luxury of the Kimpton Taconic and Equinox Resort, you will want to stay all six weeks.

Points Palooza

Any rider with year-end finals on their radar can accomplish their qualifying goals at the Vermont Summer Festival. Qualifying opportunities span the disciplines, but the most exciting offerings are served up to hunter and equitation riders by way of a World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) week and “Equitation Tuesdays.”

Tuesdays at Vermont see a flurry of young riders and national champion hopefuls focused on qualifying and preparing for year-end competitions. Their hope is that the summer competition will land them spots in prestigious year-end equitation finals. The “Equitation Tuesday” schedule, which is held in addition to equitation offerings taking place each week, features classes ranging from the THIS Children’s Medal to USEF National Hunter Seat Medal and ASPCA Maclay Horsemanship qualifiers. The idea for “Equitation Tuesdays” was introduced in 2013 and they have quickly become known among equitation riders and trainers as an “Equitation Bootcamp.”

Some of the country’s top hunter competitors make the pilgrimage to the Vermont Summer Festival for WCHR week, held annually 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 Upper Marlboro, Md.

When to go: Watch hunter riders cash in during the \$15,000 NEHJA Hunter Derby on Thur., Aug. 6.

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

The Vermont Summer Festival By The Numbers

When it started, the Vermont Summer festival included 200 stalls and two competition rings.

Today, the event has grown to nearly 1,400 stalls and five competition rings.

Each summer, the Vermont Summer Festival hires at least 20 seasonal crew members to impeccably maintain the grounds and show rings.



PHOTO BY JUMP MEDIA

A future star of horse sport gets her start in the weekly leadline competition at the Vermont Summer Festival.

750 tons of sand is mixed with fiber to create the footing. The fiber arrives in roughly 15 square bales totaling 80,000 lbs. in weight.

Each summer, Eastern Hay and Grain, the official feed supplier of the Vermont Summer Festival, delivers 1,500 bales of hay (supplemented by other deliveries) and 1,000 bags of Purina grain for the hundreds of hungry horses that come and go each summer.

The final and most important delivery each season is the stars of the show – the horses! Roughly 1,000 equine athletes are shipped in from all corners of the country by the Vermont Summer Festival’s official horse carrier, Johnson Horse Transportation. 