

# Horses always major part of Fair

Light horses, harness horses, draft horses and in-between, all are part of the fall fair scene and have been a major part of Acton Fair since inception in 1913.

Stan Matthews remembers 50 years of Acton Fair horses and has exhibited ponies for 20 years or more.

He's seen the pony classes progress from very few entries to "one of the best pony shows there is."

We're referring now to the classic harness, hackney, Shetland and Welsh ponies shown on

the line and in harness rather than the comparatively recent hunter pony show for youthful jumpers.

Stan's father-in-law showed road horses for many years. These Roadsters are usually Standardbreds but weren't always purebred in the old days. The horse was judged on his ability to cover ground well at a spanking trot. He was definitely not allowed to break into a canter or gallop.

Roadsters were the horses which took the family to town pulling the

buggy, or pulled the doctor on his rounds. It's grand to see Roadsters still a large part of the fall fair and it's exciting to see them put on the road gate as they flash round the track with legs too fast to count.

With better classes and more and more ponies in the light horse classes over on the track, spectator bleachers are always full. Hackney horse and ponies with tails as high as their knees; cobtailed Hackneys with shining harness; fancy fine harness Shetlands bearing little

resemblance to the shaggy Shetland child's riding pony; all these make the crowds cheer.

But most of all, the audience loves the big horses—the gentle giants whose place is only at fair displays now.

For a space of time in the 50's and 60's it looked as if the big horse was becoming obsolete and fall fairs had difficulty filling classes. However, suddenly the draft horse became the "in" thing for big companies to use as advertising gimmicks and a resurgence of draft horse breeding occurred.

The draft horse classes at Acton are better than ever, although few local people exhibit.

Roland Height comments on regulars who come from Stayner and Paisley to show—Beatty Brothers and Russell Teeple—and closer to home, Lloyd Stokes of Campbellville.

Last year two huge six-horse teams manoeuvred along the narrow track. Sometimes there are three teams—18 ton weight Clydes, Percherons or Belgians thundering briskly around their tight figure-eight turns.

Space is a problem on the track and although officials have tried to solve the problem for years, there's just no answer. The peninsular shaped parkgrounds are packed to seam-splitting now and as Roland Height says, "We find another spot or we fill in the pond".



Draft horses fine sight.

## Fair features

### Western, English horse shows

Four years ago the Western Horse Show came into being at Acton Fair following innovative changes in the regular saddle show which featured mainly English type classes.

Just seven or eight years ago the saddle

horse show had classes called "Road Hack" in two size categories and "Palomino Parade Horse". Very few road hacks were to be seen in Acton and Palomino Parade Horse usually meant one or two such horses or perhaps one palomino in a western

saddle.

Jumps were not inviting, too high and badly spaced, so riders from afar were not attracted to Acton.

However, changes were in the air. The growing horse population and increased interest

caused organizers to consider changing the old classes to more appropriate ones.

Today, one of the best attended English Hunter shows is the result.

In addition to this fine show with professional sturdy jumps, is a very popular Western show with well-filled classes to suit tastes from halter, performance and trail classes to action packed games, drawing excited cheers from the crowd.

But this isn't all. Three years ago a Pony Hunter show was initiated to fill Saturday morning. Youngsters come from many miles away to compete. In the afternoon gymkhana games, always a feature at the fair, provide laughs and enjoyment for kids and parents alike.

With a full Saturday and both English and Western shows on Sunday afternoon, the equestrian world is very well represented at the fair.



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A high stepper along the track.

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