

PONY POWER AT THE COSEQUIN STUART HORSE TRIALS

Agility. Endurance. Bravery. As any pony lover—breeder, spectator, or competitive rider—knows, these words aptly characterize pony capabilities. These same qualities also make for a successful eventer, says Heidi Vahue, Cosequin Stuart Horse Trials organizer and former competitor. “Eventing is right up any pony’s alley!”

From July 11-14, 2013 in Victor, New York, the Stuart Horse Trials—the “extreme triathlon of equestrian sports”—will host more than 275 riders from across North America and overseas to compete in this family-friendly event, attracting approximately 15,000 cheering spectators. Admission is free, with only a \$10/car/day parking fee or \$25 for all four days. Add vendor booths to entice rider and spectator alike, a parade of adoptable dogs from the local Lollypop Farm, a special Kids Day on Sunday, July 14 and you have many delightful reasons to check out the Stuart Horse Trials.

Pony attitude? Once you get your pony on the right track, it will soon take over, and cross country will become a virtual video game on horseback. Bouncing off banks, splashing into water and leaping over logs. Ponyrific! Ponies excel at the show jumping phase as long as they have a long enough stride. With motorbike turning abilities and swift jumping style, ponies make it look easy as they take short cuts that their larger horse counterparts can’t make. What they lack in stride they certainly make up for in their handiness.

Heidi Vahue has seen her share of pony entrants in the Stuart Horse Trials. “If you can get them to put up with the dressage phase, then it’s on to tons of fun, pony style. And of course, cross country and show jumping will entertain any pony.” In 2012, nearly a dozen ponies competed at Stuart, with Georgia’s Erin Thiel winning Jr. Beginner Novice with her 14.2 pony, Woodlands Silver Dollar and Paige Crotty from Massachusetts winning Jr. Training with her 14.2 Bantry Bay’s Winston.

Stuart is unique in so many ways. Thanks to the glacial formations known as the “drumlins” in Victor (20 minutes east of Rochester), the hills and mogul-type landforms make for a demanding cross country course. The course, grass dressage and show jumping arenas are all located on 100+ acres on five contiguous residential properties boasting abundant flowers. Spectators are encouraged to bring blankets or lawn chairs and get up close and personal to the action.

For 2013, Stuart’s Intermediate and Preliminary divisions have been approved by the USEF as one of only 19 FEI Targeted CNs. Beginner Novice and Novice level riders also will run all phases in one day on Thursday, July 11.

The very first Stuart Horse Trials began in 1990, drawing about local 70 competitors. Since then, it has earned a well-deserved reputation as a destination event, known for its care and attention to detail for the courses as well as for the two- and four-legged competitors. More than a dozen of its competitors have gone to the Olympics, with four of the five 2012 U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team members being Stuart “alumni.”

Whether as a spectator or competing with your pony, you can find complete information at www.stuarthorsetrials.org. Stay apprised by liking Stuart Horse Trials on Facebook. Competitor registration opens on May 28 and continues through June 25. The Stuart Horse Trials are sponsored by Cosequin and presented by Townline Truck and Trailer.

Amy Blum, Publicist, Stuart Horse Trials