



by Chris Lowe ■ photos by Natalie Sweet

On a day fueled by passion and prestige, young equestrian enthusiasts aged 10 to 17 gathered at the beautiful Claverdon Stud. Joanne, Philip and Chris Lowe provided the perfect venue and horses (who behaved impeccably throughout the day). The event, dedicated to the memory of Ryan Jones, provided a unique bridge between aspiring youth handlers and the high standards of the Arabian show world. It wasn't just about the horses; it was about building the confidence, discipline, and finesse required to showcase the "Versatile Arabian."

Sweet

YOUNG HANDLERS TRAINING DAY *for Arabian Horses In-Hand*



Connor Buckley



Connor Buckley

THE ART OF PREPARATION

Connor Buckley focused on the “behind-the-scenes” magic. Showing an Arabian horse begins long before entering the ring. Connor led sessions on ring preparation, emphasizing that a well-turned-out horse is a sign of respect for the judge and the breed.

- Practical Clipping: Students had the hands-on opportunity to practice clipping techniques.
- Pro Tip: Connor emphasized that clipping should enhance the horse’s natural features, not change them. The goal is to create a clean, sharp silhouette that highlights the refined Arabian head and throatlash.
- Advice: Always keep your equipment cool and move with the grain of the hair to avoid track marks.

Movement and Presentation

Coaches: Amanda Holloway, Jodie Gibson, and Miles Buckley

Transitioning from the grooming to the arena, attendees worked with coaches on the three pillars of in-hand showing: the Walk, the Trot, and the Stand.

Key Coaching Takeaways:

- The Walk: It's more than just a stroll. Coaches looked for a purposeful, four-beat gait. Handlers were taught to stay at the horse's shoulder, ensuring the horse remains straight.
- The Trot: This is where the Arabian's charisma shines. The youth were coached to find the right "speed" for their specific horse—fast enough to show suspension, but controlled enough to maintain rhythm.
- The Stand: Patience is a virtue. Amanda, Jodie, and Miles worked with individuals on "setting up" the horse so its legs are square (or slightly offset depending on the specific breed standard) to show off its conformation.

Coaching Quote:

**"You are a team. If you are tense,
your horse will be tense.
Breathe, relax your shoulders,
and let the horse's natural elegance
do the talking."**



Amanda Holloway



Amanda Holloway



Miles Buckley

Jodie Gibson

Lunch & Learn: Ethics, Rules, and Etiquette

Panelists: Joanne Lowe and Sue Jones (AHS and ECAHO Judges)

While enjoying a lovely lunch, provided by Sue Oldham, the atmosphere turned toward the “mental game” of showing. Having two highly regarded judges like Joanne and Sue provided an invaluable “view from the center of the ring.”

Discussion Highlights:

- Ring Etiquette: Always be aware of your spacing. Never “crowd” the horse in front of you.
- The Judge’s Eye: First impressions matter. From the moment you enter the ring, you are being judged.
- Sportsmanship: The panel reminded the youth that regardless of the ribbon, a true horseperson always thanks the judge and respects their fellow competitors.



Rhianna Jones



Miles Buckley

After lunch, each handler had the opportunity to demonstrate what they'd learnt by entering the outdoor arena and presenting 'their' horse to a judge. The pros were on hand to offer encouragement and advice and all did so well.

Final Thoughts

The day was a resounding success, blending technical skill with the heritage of the Arabian breed. Thanks all those who volunteered their time and expertise. These young handlers walked away with more than just tips—they left with a deeper connection to the community and the skills to carry the Arabian legacy forward.