Showing in the Rain

BY BILL VENDITTA, ADS "R" PLEASURE DRIVING AND COACHING JUDGE

"I'm showin' in the rain, just showin' in the rain
What a glorious feeling, I'm showin' again
I'm laughing at the clouds, so dark up above
The sun's in my heart 'cause I'm all ready
to be judged…"

Showing in the rain is never an ideal situation, but it doesn't have to be unpleasant, particularly if you are prepared for it. If it is a light, passing shower, then you should be fine with your regular appointments. However, if the rain has settled in and there is a possibility of your getting drenched, then you will have to take some extra care with your turnout.

Wet Harness

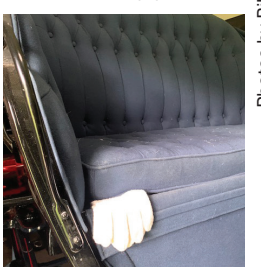
It is best to avoid getting your good leather harness soaking wet if you can help it. You might want to first consider whether using biothane, a waterproof harness, is an available option if rain is in the forecast, as it could take weeks to get your good leather harness—particularly with brass fittings—back to normal after it becomes dripping wet for an extended period.

In the event your good leather harness does get sopping wet during an outing, you should immediately upon unharnessing, towel it off to as dry a condition as possible and then hang it up for further air-drying for a period to enhance the drying of leather, stitching, fittings, etc. before storage. Pay special attention to the brass so you are not dealing later with excessive watermarks. Once reasonably dry and before storing away, use a leather cleaner followed by a quality leather conditioner to nourish the harness, including the reins, which can become very stiff following a soaking. Also give the brass or metal fittings a polish. (The above applies to your lamps, carriage and carriage fittings, as well.)

Rein Gear

Reins can get slippery when wet with possible resultant loss of control of your horse. The use of white string gloves will allow you to have a feel on wet reins and provide a good grip as well. If bad weather is anticipated, carrying a pair of readily-accessible white string gloves to be donned when needed could be a lifesaver. When not being used, these gloves should be tucked under the whip's seat, thumbs neatly folded inward, with about four inches of glove showing to the front.

White string gloves



Photos by Bill Venditta

Photo by Dana Bright

Misdee Wrigley Miller in rain gear.

Photo by Bruce Jones

Paul Buck driving his ponies in the rain.

Rain Gear

Proper rain gear is indispensable. Full-length, lightweight, waterproof outerwear will keep you dry and can be stowed in your carriage with your other spares. Caped Inverness-type raincoats are very stylish, and inexpensive ones can be found in Celtic shops or on marching band uniform websites. A lightweight waterproof rain apron should be an essential part of your kit. However, if you are wearing a raincoat, an apron over the raincoat is not required.

Rain Headwear

Obviously, you don't want to wear your special lady's hat with feathers and ribbons, or your good black or grey top hat in the rain. For the ladies, there are some very nice waxed cotton or otherwise water resistant rain hats that are waterproof and trendy these days. For the gentlemen, if top hats are a must, there are vinyl covers that will keep your top hat from getting wet and any black dye from dripping down your face. Gentlemen might also consider a waterproof Barbour or Outback oilskin, or an Akubra-style hat, which will definitely be appropriate in wet weather.

Umbrellas

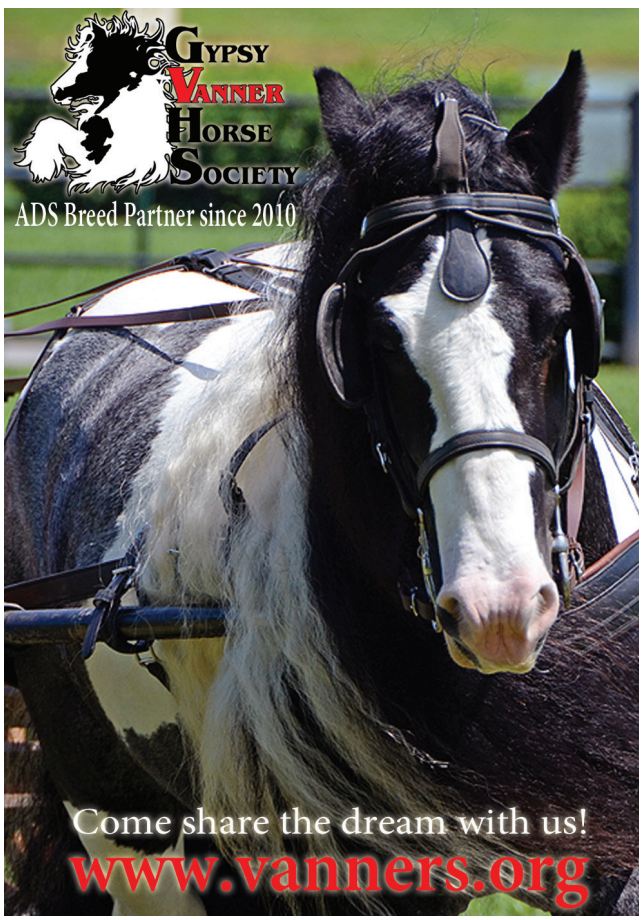
Often larger carriages and coaches are equipped with umbrella baskets as an appointment. The umbrellas therein are obviously on hand for use when raining, as needed.

Photo by Lisa Cenis

Umbrellas should be tasteful and in muted tones and solid colors, never garish or otherwise distracting from the turnout as a whole. Caution should always be observed in the quiet opening and deployment of umbrellas so as not to startle or upset horses in a following entry.

Carriage Horses in the Rain

Your horse or pony typically won't mind the rain. However, if it is wet, windy and cold a water resistant quarter sheet would be appropriate to keep your equine more comfortable during the inclement weather.

It would be well to keep in mind that wet footing can be slick so you want to take extra care in making your turns approaching the ring, as well as in the arena itself. The same applies to slick macadam roads during a carriage marathon, for example. Borium applied by your blacksmith to your horse's shoes will alleviate some slippage on roads, along with your prudent rainy-day driving.

Back in the day, driving a horse and carriage in the rain was taken in stride and considered just a normal part of everyday life. Today's whips, with appropriate preparedness and care, similarly have no need to avoid inclement-weather driving and can fully enjoy "***showin' in the rain.***"