

On the Cover: Summer Competition at its Best The Vermont Summer Festival



Kristen Bumpus of Concord, MA, and Carington competing in one of the weekly hunter derbies at the Vermont Summer Festival.

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By Lindsay Brock/Jump Media

The North American show jumping scene offers a robust competition schedule from coast to coast, but not many of those events have mastered the art of creating an environment that is more than just a horse show the way that the Vermont Summer Festival has. It's one circuit that sticks to its roots and offers a family-friendly show that is competitive, entertaining, and just plain fun. When the snow that drives the winter sports economy finally melts from the mountains of southern Vermont, the Vermont Summer Festival takes up the spotlight for six weeks.

The Vermont Summer Festival will celebrate its 25th anniversary at Harold Beebe Farm in the valley of East Dorset, Vt., just outside the bustling village of Manchester this summer. The circuit runs from July 3 through August 12, 2018, and welcomes riders, horses, and equestrian enthusiasts from all corners of the U.S., and often the world.

A Look Back

The Vermont Summer Festival began in the parking lot of a popular ski resort in Killington, Vt. With the look and feel

of a carnival, the show was small but popular among local show jumping barns and even drew participants from neighboring states in the Northeastern U.S., and Southeastern Canadian provinces. After the show quickly outgrew its location in Killington, it moved to another ski area at Sugarbush Resort in Warren, Vt, just southwest of Waitfield.

During the time that the show called Waitfield home, John Ammerman was invited to judge at the Vermont Summer Festival and never left. Ammerman couldn't shake an attraction to the event and eventually came on as its manager more than 20 years ago. He settled the event at its forever home in East Dorset and has worked to make it one of the most well-liked circuits among in North America. That dedication to the show's success, combined with his service to the sport in many other capacities, helped him to be inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 2011.

"I am proud to say that after 25 years, we are still here and continuing to grow and thrive," said Ammerman, who manages the show alongside his wife Dotty, who rides. "The show has experienced quite the evolution and we put all our efforts into these show grounds. We made, and continue to make, improvements year after year."

One Special Horse Show

Today, the Vermont Summer Festival has created a name for itself as a gem on the North American summer tour. It's an event that is a favorite among riders and spectators alike.

In the ring, qualifying opportunities for year-end finals span the disciplines, but the most exciting offerings exist for hunter and equitation riders by way of a World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) week and "Equitation Tuesdays."

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.

Aside from point-chasing, there are even more opportunities for hunters. The weekly \$5,000 3'3" NEHJA Hunter Derby makes its return in 2018 to highlight the Thursday schedule and culminates with a \$15,000 offering on August 9 during the sixth and final week.

Tegan Treacy of Needham, MA, and her own Colorado competing in the grand prix ring at the Vermont Summer Festival.

Photo by Jump Media



For equitation hopefuls, the Vermont Summer Festival has quickly made a name for itself among equitation riders and trainers as an “Equitation Bootcamp” of sorts. With opportunities to qualify for all the major finals, Tuesdays at Vermont are host to a big group of young riders and national champion hopefuls, all with the goal of preparing for prestigious year-end goals.

A hotbed for the development of young horses, and often the spot where up-and-coming riders start to make a name for themselves, the Vermont Summer Festival jumper rings host action that never disappoints. Each week, the show peaks with a \$30,000 Grand Prix, held the first five Saturdays of the six-week circuit, before the season culminates with the \$50,000 Grand Prix on the final weekend. It’s not uncommon to spot a young and talented horse making its U.S. debut, or a first grand prix win for a young rider, which came for New York-based rider Matthew Metell during the 2017 season.

Additionally, it’s not just the riders and the horses who steal the show in Vermont. The course designers at the Vermont Summer Festival are some of the best in the world. The list includes the likes of Alan Wade of Ireland, who has the prestigious appointment of course designer for the 2018 World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Tryon, N.C., in September. In addition, Mexico’s Manuel Esparza was part of the course-building team at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, while 1976 Olympic silver medalist Michel Vaillancourt has developed a reputation as one of the best in the world. All three will bring their talents to Vermont this summer.

Panoramic views of the Vermont mountain ranges, ideal weather, and a relaxed family-friendly atmosphere have made the Vermont Summer Festival a top choice among summer horse show destinations through the 25 years it has been running at Harold Beebe Farm. And, while the vibe is casual, the competition is thrilling.

If you go:

- **Dine out!** Take a stroll through the streets of Manchester, VT, and indulge in the restaurant options. Also, don’t miss the exhibitor party at Bromley Mountain Adventure Park. While the mountain doesn’t have white peaks during the summer months, it is far from boring with zip lines, miniature golf, the big splash waterslide, and more. Tip: There’s an exhibitor party every Wednesday night!
- **Stay the night!** There are plenty of options to make the Vermont Summer Festival and home away from home, including local lodging favorites like The Inns At Equinox and The Equinox Resort, as well as the all-new Hampton Inn & Suites Manchester.
- **Experience Vermont!** Reserve some time to check out the recreation and entertainment that southern Vermont has to offer. Check out the exclusive travel guide in this issue for ideas.
- **Watch hunter riders cash in** during the \$15,000 NEHJA Hunter Derby on Thursday, August 9.
- **Make it a Saturday outing!** Purchase a ticket for one of the weekly grand prix events to benefit The Dorset School, Manchester Community Library, and Rotary Club of Manchester, and watch the best riders conquer the biggest jumps. Join the conversation by using tags #VSF2018 and #summerinvermont on social media. Note: Admission Wednesday-Friday is \$6 for adults/\$3 for children and \$9 for adults/\$5 for children on Saturdays and Sundays.

