

EQUITATION TUESDAY EVENTS RETURN TO THE VERMONT SUMMER FESTIVAL, RUNNING FROM JUNE 30 THROUGH AUGUST 9, 2020. PHOTO © ANDREW RYBACK PHOTOGRAPHY.



*Equitation Riders Chase  
Points, Confidence, and Success  
at Vermont Summer Festival*



The old adage “build it and they will come” did not apply to the Vermont Summer Festival’s launch of Equitation Tuesday in 2013 because many of the biggest names in equitation were already making the six-week horse show their summer home. Championed by former Technical Director of the Vermont Summer Festival, Billy Glass, Equitation Tuesday is a concept born out of a dream – the dream that every junior rider has of finding themselves competing shoulder-to-shoulder with the best young riders in North America at yearly equitation championships and year-end finals.

The addition of Equitation Tuesday to the already dynamic Vermont Summer Festival schedule allowed more riders the chance to qualify for career-making finals without chasing points from horse show to horse show. The effort served as the creation of additional opportunities for what was already there: a large number of very talented young riders with big futures ahead of them.

Alumni of the Vermont Summer Festival’s Equitation Tuesday program include 2017 Platinum Performance/ USEF Talent Search Finals—East winner McKayla

Langmeier of East Granby, CT, and 2018 ASPCA Maclay National Champion Sam Walker of town/ province, Canada, proving the program is a popular stepping stone to great success. Helping riders climb the ranks from the grassroots level to the pinnacle of the sport, many equestrian success stories have been born in Vermont.

Referred to as “Equitation Bootcamp” by many competitors, the Vermont Summer Festival, running for six weeks in the scenic Manchester area each summer, allows any rider with equitation finals on his or her “to do” list to check many of the boxes in one place. Qualifying classes for many of the major finals are on the schedule, including the THIS Children’s Medal, NEHC Junior Hunt Seat Medal, USEF National Hunter Seat Medal, ASPCA Horsemanship, and USEF Talent Search.

With her sights set on qualifying for the 2019 Capital Challenge Horse Show in Upper Marlboro, MD, Ava Strohmeier, 16, piloted Vince, owned by Ashley Denmark, to the blue at the Vermont Summer Festival in 2019.

ABOVE: REFERRED TO AS “EQUITATION BOOTCAMP” THE VERMONT SUMMER FESTIVAL ALLOWS ANY RIDER WITH EQUITATION FINALS ON HIS OR HER “TO DO” LIST TO CHECK MANY OF THE BOXES IN ONE PLACE. PHOTO © JUMP MEDIA.



AVA STROHMEYER OF TUXEDO PARK, NY RIDING VINCE TO AN EQUITATION BLUE AT THE 2019 VERMONT SUMMER FESTIVAL. PHOTO © ANDREW RYBACK PHOTOGRAPHY.

“Equitation Tuesday is such a great opportunity for me,” said the rider who hails from Tuxedo Park, NY. “I worked hard to qualify for finals, and I was able to gain a lot of experience while getting points. The opportunity was fantastic. I felt great about it before I had even started.”

While the obvious perks for riders with big year-end goals create substantial interest for the Vermont Summer Festival’s Equitation Tuesday classes, trainers are also able to use it as a one-stop shop for qualifying riders. The riders of New England Farm, based in Bedford, NY, and led by trainer Cynthia Williams, were one group in particular that put their best foot forward in Vermont in 2019.

“My program focuses on developing riders and horses from the ground up, so for that, the Vermont Summer Festival is a must-do in my barn,” said Williams, who has been based in the New York/Connecticut area since the early 1980s and recalls many summers settling in at the picturesque Vermont Summer Festival during the warmer months of the competition season. “Equitation Tuesday provides a day dedicated to equitation where the schedule is convenient and the competition is perfect for gaining experience and, ultimately, qualifying for finals. It’s a gift that keeps us from having to hit the road and chase points.”

During the Vermont Summer Festival last year, New England Farm rider Caroline Blake of Westport, CT, collected two wins during Equitation Tuesday. She piloted New England Farm’s Fellow Traveler to blue ribbons in both the Dover Saddlery/USEF Hunter Seat Medal and New England Horse Council (NEHC) Junior Hunt Seat Medal, ultimately qualifying the 16-year-old for the NEHC Hunt Seat Medal Final last fall.

Tuesdays at Vermont see a frenzy of young riders and national champion hopefuls with laser focus on qualifying and preparing for year-end finals. Their hope is that their summer competition results will land them in the show rings for prestigious year-end equitation finals.

In 2020, Equitation Tuesday events return to the Vermont Summer Festival, running from June 30 through August 9. Set in the foothills of the southern Vermont mountains, the show is a mecca for qualifying, and climbing the equitation ranks in addition to varied schedules for hunter and jumper riders during the week. Most importantly, however, Vermont is best known as the place where future equitation dreams take shape, and young riders embark on their journey toward future success in their sport. ■

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*Want to find out more about Equitation Tuesday and the Vermont Summer Festival? Visit [vt-summerfestival.com](http://vt-summerfestival.com), or find it on Facebook and Instagram.*