



REGION 16

What We Heard From the Membership

2026 Championship Show Survey • Summary for Membership Discussion

The big picture

The survey shows strong interest in making the Region 16 Championship Show more accessible and practical for Region 16 members—while preserving the competition, facility quality and championship experience that members value. The survey does not identify one mandatory venue or date; it gives leadership a clear set of priorities for evaluating future options.

What members told us

Finding	What the survey showed
Participation opportunity	71.4% of 56 respondents answering the Region 16 involvement question currently show in Region 16 but do not attend the Region 16 Championship Show.
Distance	60.4% of 48 respondents who identified non-attendance reasons selected distance/travel time.
Single biggest barrier	44.2% of 47 respondents selected distance/travel as the single biggest factor keeping them from attending.
Travel range	Among 58 respondents, 53.3% would travel 4 hours or less; 76.6% would travel 5 hours or less.
Show length	Among 57 respondents, 38.6% preferred a maximum of four days and 26.3% preferred three days.
Location interest	Among 57 respondents, Syracuse was selected by 42.4% and West Springfield by 23.7% as locations they would seriously consider.

Why members are not attending Virginia

- Distance/travel time was the most common reason, followed by preferring to show closer to home and overall cost.
- Written comments repeatedly connected distance with hauling expense, lodging, time away from work/family, arranging horse care and the difficulty of preparing horses for Youth Nationals.
- Several respondents said the current show is too far to justify for small classes or for exhibitors showing only one or two horses.

What members like about Virginia

The survey also makes clear that members value important aspects of the Virginia model. Among 22 respondents to this specific question, **63.6% selected both the opportunity to compete against horses they don't normally see, and the Virginia Horse Center facility itself; 54.5% selected the quality/depth of the classes; and 50% selected the level of competition.** Members also praised the facility, footing, work areas and overall experience in written comments.

The challenge for future years

The question is not simply whether the show should be closer. It is whether Region 16 can create a more accessible show that is also financially sustainable, competitively meaningful and attractive enough to draw the entries needed to support it.

What This Could Mean for Future Years

The membership's priorities

Priority	What members are looking for
Accessibility	A location that reduces travel time, hauling expense and time away from work/family.
Meaningful competition	Enough entries to create worthwhile class sizes and a true championship experience.
Shorter, efficient show	A three- or four-day model and/or a more condensed schedule.
Reasonable total cost	Affordable participation overall; members recognize that entry fees are only one part of the cost.
Viable facility	Quality footing, stabling, warm-up/work areas and appropriate weather contingencies.
Smart scheduling	Avoid major conflicts with Empire, Youth Nationals and other regional shows; carefully evaluate any early-May option.
Broad participation	Opportunity/Academy, Sport Horse, Dressage and other offerings that can attract more exhibitors where practical.
Strong experience	A fun, welcoming show with meaningful awards, vendors, education and a positive atmosphere.

Members are willing to help make a Northeast show work

The survey asked members what they would be willing to do to make a Region 16 show more affordable and sustainable.

Potential change/contribution	Share
Fewer days	50.9%
More condensed class schedule	43.9%
Encourage other Region 16 exhibitors	38.6%
Personally sponsor a class/activity	35.1%
Changes to number of classes	31.6%
Help secure sponsors	26.3%

Higher fees: Among 55 respondents, 32.7% said they would still attend a closer show with somewhat higher entry fees, 27.3% would probably still attend, and 34.5% said it would depend on the amount.

What happens next

- Leadership will use the survey findings as one input—not the sole factor—in evaluating potential future venues and dates.
- Potential venues should be compared using the same criteria: accessibility, facility quality, projected attendance, calendar fit and total show economics.
- Before committing to a venue, Region 16 should understand projected costs, required entries, likely trainer/exhibitor participation and sponsorship opportunities.
- If a Northeast option is pursued, the goal should be to preserve the strongest elements members value about Virginia while addressing the accessibility barriers identified in the survey.
- The membership should continue to receive clear information about the assumptions, options and financial realities behind the eventual decision.

A shared objective

The survey gives us an opportunity to focus the conversation on what Region 16 members need from their championship show: a place where more members can realistically participate, compete and feel that the show belongs to their region—while ensuring the event is strong enough to sustain itself.

Membership discussion: What would a successful future Region 16 Championship Show look like?

Source: 2026 Region 16 Championship Survey results provided for analysis.