



Idaho 4-H Horse Judging Procedures and Rules (Effective: October 1, 2024)

This publication was designed to provide a consistent protocol in conducting club, county, district, and state horse judging events throughout Idaho.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the 4-H Horse Judging Contest is to teach youth the principles of horse selection and performance evaluation as related to equine recreational activities and provide an opportunity for youth to demonstrate their knowledge of equine-related matters in a competitive setting and to stimulate youth achievement. We hope that this competition will help youth improve their skills in decision-making, communication, and teamwork.

ELIGIBILITY

Contestants must be currently enrolled in the Idaho 4-H program. Contestants do not have to be enrolled in the horse project but may be assessed an additional fee to participate in the contest. All ages are as of January 1st of the current year. Wherever individual age divisions are referenced: Juniors = 8 to 13, Seniors = 14 to 18. Age divisions for teams shall consist of Junior (8 to 13) and Senior (14 to 18). Mixed age teams are permitted; however, the age of the oldest team member will determine in which division the team competes.

At the club, county, and district levels **ONLY**, individual participation is permitted at the discretion of that contest's management in order to form teams. Individual participation age divisions are Juniors (8 to 10), Intermediates (11 to 13), and Seniors (14 to 18).

DRESS CODE

Participants are to wear appropriate English or Western attire throughout all contests and at awards presentations. Accepted English attire includes breeches/jodhpurs, tall or short hard-soled boots, shirt with collar, and jacket. Accepted Western attire includes long pants and belt, Western hard-soled boots, and long-sleeved shirt with collar, which must be tucked into pants.

For Horse Judging, Western hats, Derby hats, or helmets may be worn at the discretion of the contest officials when judging in an outdoor setting. Hats or helmets may NOT be worn when judging indoors or while giving oral reasons.

Direct any questions regarding attire to the Contest Committee, prior to contest start. Violations of attire rules will result in disqualification.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All contestants, coaches, volunteers, and parents are expected to follow these rules and the 4-H Code of Conduct listed in Idaho 4-H Policies and Procedures. Failure to comply may result in removal from

the contest area, disqualification, and/or forfeiture of any possible awards.

CONTEST

1. A team may have three (3) or four (4) members; when four (4) are entered, the three (3) highest overall scores will make up the team totals. At the club, county, and district levels, individual participation is permitted at the discretion of that contest's management in order to help form teams.
2. All contestants will report to the contest site where they will receive full instructions and be given placing cards
3. Contestants will be sorted into groups. Each group will have an adult group leader that keeps the group together, answers any logistics questions, and ensures there is no talking during the contests. All contestants will remain with their assigned group throughout the contest.
4. A mandatory orientation and review of rules will be done prior to the start of the judging contest. At this time, judging classes and oral reasons classes will be announced and contestants may ask questions to the Contest Superintendent
5. Once the contest begins, there shall be no conferring between the contestants and anyone else except as directed by the Contest Superintendents or their representatives. Contestants found talking may be disqualified from the contest and any awards may be forfeited.
6. No cell phones or other mobile electronic devices will be permitted into the judging contest or reasons contest areas. Contestants found using electronic devices may be disqualified from the contest and any awards may be forfeited.
7. Contestants are responsible for their own writing instruments and notepads for the purpose of taking notes for reasons classes.
8. Up to four (4) halter/quality classes will be judged. Halter/quality classes may include, but are not limited to: American Saddlebred, Quarter Horse, Appaloosa, Arabian, Paint, Morgan, Draft Breeds and Miniature Horses. Contestants will give oral reasons on one (1) halter/*quality* class. All halter/*quality* classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind, mouth, and reproduction. *Contest officials are strongly encouraged to form halter/quality classes using the same sex of horses.*
9. Up to four (4) performance classes will be judged. Performance classes may include, but are not limited to: Western Pleasure, Western Equitation, English Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Hunt Seat Equitation, Saddle Seat Equitation, Western Riding, Reining, Western Horsemanship, Hunter Hack, and driving. Oral reasons will be given on one (1) performance class. Performance horses will be judged as sound. All tack and equipment will be judged as legal.
10. The animals and showmen will be designated by numbers 1-2-3-4.
11. Horses will not be handled by the contestants, but time will be provided in halter/quality classes for close inspection and to observe the horses at a walk and trot or second gait. During halter/quality classes, contestants will be in the arena with the horses and handlers, but contestants must stay within the safe boundaries usually indicated by cones.
12. During performance classes, contestants will judge from outside the arena, usually seated with their groups in bleachers.
13. Up to fifteen (15) minutes will be allowed for contestants to judge, make their observations, take notes, and fill out their placing cards for each halter/quality class.
14. In halter/quality classes, horses are usually viewed for two (2) minutes from each view—front, left side, rear, and right side.
15. Classes will be placed in accordance with the rules of the United States Equestrian Federation or the respective breed association rules, if applicable.
16. All tack and attire will be considered legal. All exhibition riders are encouraged to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet.

ORAL REASONS

Perhaps one of the most important skills youth gain through horse judging contests is the ability to verbally share with contest officials the rationale for their respective class placings.

1. Prior to the contest, oral reasons orders may be assigned. If oral reasons orders are assigned, oral reasons orders will be available at the check-in area.
2. Contestants will be given at least 20 (twenty) minutes to prepare oral reasons between the last judging class and the first oral reasons presentations.
3. Two (2) minutes will be allowed for each contestant to give oral reasons to the judge. For Idaho 4-H horse judging contests, contestants may use notes. However, excessive use of notes may be counted against the contestant at the discretion of the judges.
4. In keeping with national horse judging contest protocols, SENIOR COMPETITORS ONLY may have up to 25 (twenty-five) points deducted for the use of notes during the presentation of oral reasons. If this protocol is to be enforced, it will be announced by the contest officials during orientation.
5. No contestant that gives oral reasons on any class may receive oral reasons score of zero (0).
6. *To help guide a more objective process for evaluating oral reasons, a scorecard was developed and can be found on the last page of this publication.*

JUDGES

1. The judge(s) shall place the classes while the contestants are working in the arena. The judge(s) shall enter their placings on the placing card, indicate the cuts to be made, and give the card to the contest Superintendent(s) for final review and approval.
2. When the contestant has finished giving reasons, the reasons judge will place the reasons score on the contestant's oral reasons scorecard for tabulation.

DETERMINATION OF PLACING

1. Fifty (50) points shall constitute a perfect mark on placing and 50 points shall constitute a perfect mark on reasons.
2. Idaho 4-H Horse programs have adopted the recommended "Cut Scale" of the National Horse Judging Team Coaches' Association. As official contest judges assign cuts to their class placings, they are encouraged to use the following table in determining point values.
3. The total value of the combined cuts for a class may not exceed 15 (fifteen). If the cuts total 15 (fifteen), the cut value for the middle pair may not be greater than 5 (five).

1	Horses are extremely similar; no obvious reason why one should be placed over the other; or both horses have numerous faults and none supersedes the others; placing is strictly a matter of personal preference; placing varies among the official judges
2	Horses are very close, but one horse has one or two qualitative or quantitative advantage; the majority of official judges would not switch the pair, but half of the contestants could logically switch the pair
3	Horses of similar quality, but there is some logical placing in favor of one horse; either one horse has several advantages or one has several faults; all official judges would agree on the placing; no more than one third of contestants would be expected to switch the pair
4	Horses are not of similar quality; one horse has several decided advantages based on many points; all experts would quickly see the placing; no guesswork or personal preference required to make placing; no more than 10% of the contestants would be expected to switch the pair
5	Large numbers of extreme differences between the horses; placing is obvious to everyone on first, quick observation; careful study not required for the placing; pair consists of an inferior horse vs. a consistent winner; only very inexperienced, uninformed contestants would switch the pair
6	Horses not even comparable; differences reflective of a champion quality horse or performance vs. a horse or performance that is not of show quality

RECOGNITION

1. Recognition will be given to the top five (5) individuals within each age division (Junior and Senior). If individual participation is offered at the club, county, and district levels ONLY, individual awards may be given to the top five (5) Juniors (ages 8 – 10), top five (5) Intermediates (ages 11 – 13), and top five (5) Seniors (ages 14 – 18).
2. Where designated team competitions are held, recognition is encouraged for the top three (3) Junior and top three (3) Senior teams.
3. Priority order for breaking ties:
 - a. The contestant or team having the highest reasons score will be listed first.
 - b. If still tied, the contestant or team having the highest score in placing reason classes shall be listed first.
 - c. If still tied, the contestant or team with the highest overall placing score will be listed first.
 - d. If still tied, the contestant or team with the highest single class reasons score will be listed first.

STATE CONTEST ELIGIBILITY

Each of the four 4-H Extension Districts may enter ten (10) teams, *{preferably five (5) Junior teams and five (5) Senior teams}*, consisting of 3 – 4 members per team. The use of 4-member teams is strongly encouraged but is not required. Teams may consist of members from the same club, same county, or multiple counties within that district at the discretion of their district coordinator. Each contestant shall be eligible for individual and team awards.

NATIONAL CONTEST ELIGIBILITY

1. *The top three (3) senior teams MAY qualify for national contests IF the team meets the state and national contests' requirements and deadlines.*
2. *Teams must complete and return the national contest interest form by the state's deadline in order to compete at Eastern National 4-H Roundup or All-American Quarter Horse Congress.*
3. *State will pay the entry fee for Eastern National 4-H Roundup only. Contestants and chaperones are responsible for all other expenses.*
4. *At least one officially certified, approved adult volunteer must accompany each individual/team.*
5. *Teams may choose other regional/national contests IF they meet the contests' requirements and deadlines.*
6. *All individuals, teams, coaches, and chaperones representing Idaho 4-H, must follow national contest rules and must follow current Idaho 4-H Policies and Procedures.*

POSSIBLE REGIONAL/NATIONAL 4-H HORSE JUDGING CONTESTS

1. Eastern National 4-H Roundup, first weekend in November, Louisville, KY; <http://www.4hroundup.com/>
2. All American Quarter Horse Congress, mid-October, Columbus, OH; <https://www.quarterhorsecongress.com/youth-contests>
3. Grand National and World Championship Morgan Horse Show, early-mid October, Oklahoma City, OK <https://www.morganhorse.com/programs/youth/contests/>; contact Nicole Dumas, Nicole@morganhorse.com, 859-448-5109
4. Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE), mid-October, Billings, MT; <https://thenile.org/events/youth/ffa-4-h-contests/>; Shelby Shaw, shelby@thenile.org, 406-256-2495
5. Arabian Horse Youth Association, late October, Tulsa, <https://www.arabianhorses.org/youth/competition/youth@arabianhorses.org>, 303-696-4505
6. AjPHA/AYA World Show, late June, Fort Worth, TX; <https://apha.com/worldshow/judgingcontest/>; Hannah Eichman; heichman@apha.com
7. AQHYA World Show, early August, Oklahoma City, OK; <https://www.aqha.com/aqhya-world-championship-show-contests>

SAMPLE Idaho 4-H Horse Judging Oral Reasons Score Card

Contestant Number: _____ Class Number: _____

Class Name: _____

PRESENTATION (10)

Grooming
 Posture
 Poise, Confidence
 Eye Contact
 Clear, audible voice
 Grammar
 Points Awarded

E 10-9	G 8-6	F 5-3	N 2-1
------------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

ORGANIZATION (10)

Introduction
 Logical Order
 Pairs Used
 Conclusion
 Points Awarded

E 10-9	G 8-6	F 5-3	N 2-1
------------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT (20)

Major strengths
 Weaknesses
 Important differences
 Points Awarded

E 20-16	G 7-11	F 10-6	N 5-1
-------------------	------------------	------------------	-----------------

APPROPRIATE TERMS USED (10)

Descriptive adjectives
 Correct names and parts
 Points Awarded

E 10-9	G 8-6	F 5-3	N 2-1
------------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

E = Excellent
G = Good
F = Fair
N = Needs Improvement

Total Score _____

Reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Idaho 4-H Youth Horse Council on September 22, 2016. Revised 2024.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of University of Idaho Extension, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83844. The University of Idaho provides equal opportunity in education and employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran, as required by state and federal laws.