

Massachusetts 4-H Horse Program

Horse Judging Contest Rules and Procedures

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Horse Judging contest is to provide, in a friendly but competitive setting, an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of equine science and the practical application of this knowledge and skill. It is hoped that this contest will generate new friendships and be a rewarding experience for the contestants.

WHAT IS A HORSE JUDGING CONTEST

Horse Judging allows contestants to form opinions and place a class of 4 horses based on a certain set of criteria. Contestants also justify why they placed the class the way they did by giving oral reasons. The horse judging contest is described in more detail under THE CONTEST section.

CONTESTANTS AND ELIGIBILITY

Any 4-H member requiring an accommodation at a Massachusetts 4-H horse event must contact the State 4-H Equine Science Coordinator in advance of the event to discuss appropriate accommodations.

At the County Level

1. Juniors are youth ages 8 – 13 as of January 1 of the competition year.
2. Seniors must be at least 14 years old but not have reached their 19th birthday as of January 1 of the competition year.
3. A novice division may be offered for 4-H juniors and seniors that are new to competing in the contest. Individuals in the novice division will not be eligible to compete at the state contest but will be judged and placed in the novice division.
4. Juniors and seniors compete individually at the County level.
5. A cloverbud division may also be offered at the county level for youth ages 5 - 7. Cloverbuds should participate in a non competitive learning activity that will introduce them to the contest.
6. All contestants must be members of 4-H in the county they are representing during the year in which this event is held.
7. Counties may choose to hold their county contests at any time during the year, although most counties hold their contests in the late fall or winter months.
8. Teams may be selected by any procedure which a county deems appropriate, however most counties hold a county level contest to determine who will be on the state team.

At the State Level

1. Juniors compete as a county team at the state contest. Junior county teams consist of four members plus 1 alternate who have been previously selected by their county. In teams in which there are four members, all will compete. Alternates may also attend and will be allowed to participate in the contest. If space allows, the alternate may be teamed with other alternates from other counties to form a blended team. In cases where a county team has fewer than 4 members, all efforts will be made to place an alternate from another county on that team to comprise a team of 4 contestants.
2. Seniors compete individually at the state contest. Seniors who have previously competed in the National 4-H Horse Roundup in horse judging are ineligible to participate in the state contest, but are encouraged to attend and assist with the state contest.

THE CONTEST

1. Contestants shall not wear any clothing, pins or badges that will, in any way, reveal their identity or the state they represent. Hats are prohibited in the judging arena, with the exception of appropriate clothing for cold weather.
2. While the contest is in progress, there shall be no conferring between the contestants or anyone else except as directed by the Contest Superintendents or their representative.
3. One to three halter classes may be judged. The following breeds are suggested in halter classes: American Saddlebred, Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred (Hunters), Appaloosa, Arabian, Paint, Pinto, Morgan, and Draft Breeds. Contestants may be required to give oral reasons on in hand classes. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind and mouth.
4. One to three performance classes may be judged. Some examples of performance classes include Western Pleasure, English Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Hunter Hack, Western Riding, Reining, Plantation English Pleasure Walking Horse, Pleasure Driving, Stock Seat, Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat Equitation and Saddlebred Three-Gaited and Country English Pleasure. Contestants may be required to give oral reasons on performance classes. Performance horses will be judged as seen (Unsoundness to be penalized accordingly). All tack and attire is considered legal.
5. The animals will be designated 1-2-3-4 worn by the handler/rider.
6. Horses will not be handled by the contestants, but time will be provided in halter classes for close inspection and to observe the horses at a walk and trot.
7. Fifteen (15) minutes will be allowed for contestants to judge non-reasons classes and 17 minutes will be given for contestants during reasons classes to make their observations, take notes, and fill out their placing cards.

The breakdown of In Hand classes is as follows:

- 2 minutes right side view
- 2 minutes front view
- 2 minutes left side view
- 2 minutes hind view
- 5 minutes for each horse to walk and trot/jog
- 2 minutes for close inspection
- 2 minutes for final placements in reasons classes only

Performance classes will run based on the specifications of the class. Ample time should be given to contestants to view each horse at each gait and/or obstacle performed. Performance classes should not exceed 15 minutes in length.

8. OFFICIAL placings will be given at the completion of the contest along with cuts and an explanation of the placings.
9. Once the contest has started, contestants are not allowed to leave the judging area until the contest has completed.
10. Contestants are not allowed to have electronic devices on them during the contest. Ipods, phones, etc must be left with a leader or the contest superintendent.
11. Contestants should use pencils or blue or black inked pins.
12. Contestants should use the Horse Judging Manual located on the Massachusetts 4-H Horse website at <http://mass4h.org/index.php/programs/animal-science/horses> to practice for horse judging.

REASONS

1. The judge will indicate which classes are reasons classes during the contest.
2. A minimum of 2 sets of reasons must be presented by seniors and at least one set must be presented by juniors at each contest.
3. 2 minutes will be allowed for contestants to present their oral reasons to the judge.
4. Contestants may use notes when judging, but are not permitted to use notes while giving oral reasons. (Juniors may use notes, but will receive a 5 point deduction on their score if they use notes).
5. The contestant's placing card will be made available to them upon entering the reasons room ONLY if they request it.
6. Any talking during the preparation of reasons will be cause for elimination from the contest

JUDGES

1. Classes will be placed in accordance with the rules of the United States Equestrian Federation or the respective breed association rules, if applicable.
2. The judges shall place the classes while the contestants are placing the classes. The judges shall enter their placings on the placing card, indicate the cuts to be made, and file that card with the Superintendents for final review and approval.
3. When the contestant has finished their reasons, the reasons listener will place the reasons score upon the contestant's reason's sheet and turn it in for tabulation.

DETERMINATION OF RATINGS

1. Fifty (50) points shall constitute a perfect mark on placing and fifty (50) points a perfect mark on reasons.
2. For placings or reasons that are not correct, points will be deducted from that 50 points depending on the judges placing and the official cuts for that class
3. Breaking ties(priority order)
 - a) The contestant having the highest score in placing reasons classes shall be listed first.
 - b) If still tied, the contestant with the highest overall placing score in all classes shall be listed first.

CUTS

The Eastern National 4-H Horse Judging Contest has adopted the recommended Cut Scale of the National Horse Judging Team Coaches' Association, That scale is given below and we encourage all states to consider its adoption.

Cuts Description

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.

RUNNING A HORSE JUDGING CONTEST

The horse judging competition is one of the most educational of the 4-H horse events. However, the educational value is directly influenced by the contest's success. The following is a list of guidelines for planning and conducting a successful horse judging event.

Facilities

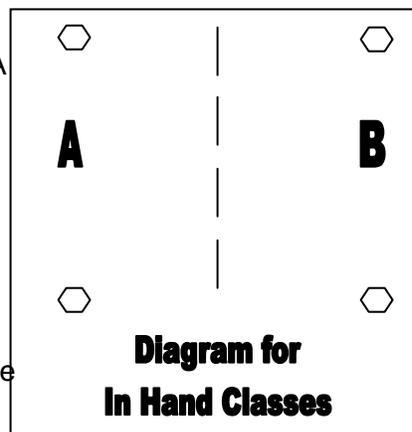
If an indoor arena is available, make arrangements for its use. Rain or cold, windy weather will affect the contestant's vision, concentration, and ability to take notes. Bleachers or an area that will permit contestants to easily view all performance classes is recommended, as well as an isolated area or series of rooms in which contestants can study notes and give reasons without distraction. The arena should be large enough to handle all of the classes and have adequate lighting. Space should be available for a registration/tabulation table and for trailer parking and unloading if horses will be brought in from off site. Restrooms are necessary.

Horses

Once the number of conformation and performance classes is decided, the number of horses needed for the contest will be known. It is often helpful to select horses for conformation classes that can be used in performance classes. This will decrease the total number of horses needed to conduct the contest. If a weanling, yearling, or 2-year-old conformation class is scheduled, these horses should be of the same age. Age, sex, and breed generally will have no bearing on performance classes.

Set Up For In Hand Classes

- Cones should be set a minimum of 50 feet apart in a square.
- Horses will line up head to tail to start in the middle of the cones.
- Contestants should be split into 2 groups, one standing on side A and one standing on side B. Contestants may move back and forth on their side to view the horses but may not go in front of the cones (with the exception of close inspection).
- Contestants will have 2 minutes to judge the side view. After 2 minutes, horses will turn ¼ turn to the right to give a front/rear view. Horses will continue to turn every 2 minutes until all 4 sides have been viewed by each contestant.
- When it is time for horses to walk and trot/jog, contestants on each side will split in half and half will go to one cone on their side while the other half will go to the other cone.
- Horses will then walk a complete square and then trot/jog a complete square inside of the cones.
- In an in-hand class, all horses are considered sound.



Set Up For Performance Classes

Contestants should be in a position that they can see all of the gaits the horse is performing. If bleachers are not available, it is recommended that contestants stand on the outside of the ring. If contestants are in an indoor arena, it is recommended that they stand at one end of the ring that is separated from the horses by cones or posts. At no time should horses be ridden around contestants. In a performance class, all tack is considered legal.

Personnel

A horse judging contest requires the assistance of a number of individuals. Their roles and responsibilities are varied, but each is important to the contest's overall success.

A handler or rider is needed for each horse in each conformation or performance class. Horses in conformation classes should be placed head to tail (profile) from left to right in numerical order (1 to 4) in a straight line, with one horse-length between. Handlers should remain conscious of the animals during each class period, keeping them alert and properly set up or parked out. Handlers should make their numbers visible to contestants and, when possible, remain out of the line of view of the contestants. Horses should be tracked in a straight line from the center of one group of assembled contestants to the center of the other group. Horses should be walked both ways and then trotted (or shown at an appropriate increase in speed, depending on breed) both ways. This will give each group a front and rear view of each horse at both the walk and the trot.

A group leader should be assigned to each group of contestants and should stay with that group from the start of the first class period until the final class is finished. If reasons are to be given, a group leader should stay with the contestants until the reasons are finished. The group leader should be aware of the titles or numbers of all classes and which classes are reasons classes. Contestants should only be permitted to talk to their group leader during the contest, and any contestant found visiting with another should be reported by the group leader to the contest manager. Group leaders are responsible for keeping their contestants in a group at all times. Contestants should be kept at least 25 to 30 feet from the horses (except during close inspection) and moved from one class to the next as a group. The use of cones can help the contestants know how close to the horses they are allowed to stand. Group leaders are responsible for picking up the contestants' cards after each class.

One individual should be designated as the official contest timer and announcer. This individual should have a list of all classes, including those that are reasons classes. In addition, he or she should be responsible for the timing of each class.

A card runner is needed to pick up the cards from group leaders following each class and to deliver those cards to the tabulation volunteers. The card runner should also be responsible for periodically picking up cards with reasons scores on them from each reasons judge.

An official judge or panel of will put the official placings and cuts on each class, and listen to reasons. Additional judges may be needed to listen to reasons to help move the contest along more quickly. Good sources for official contest judges are former horse judging team members, horse show judges familiar with reasons and their scoring, leaders or agents that have been judging team coaches, etc. If time allows, schedule a critique of the classes by the official judges before giving the contest results. This will greatly add to the contest event's educational aspect. In addition, the official contest judges should be aware of the importance of the proper assigning of "cuts" to the class placings. Each of the three cuts must be based upon the level of difficulty or the amount of difference that exists between two horses in a given pair. An extremely close placing, one which is difficult or in which not much difference exists between the two horses in the pair, should be assigned a relatively low (1 to 3 points) cut. An easier placing, or one in which more difference between the two horses is evident, should command a higher (4 to 5 points) cut or penalty for a wrong placing. If a large amount of difference exists, a higher (6 to 8 points) cut is in order. Cuts must have a numerical value of at least 1 with the

total of the three cuts not exceeding 15. If the total of all three cuts is 14, the middle cut cannot be greater than 8.

Several individuals should be in charge of registration and tabulation. You should assign each contestant a number, especially in contests that have a large participation. That number should precede the contestant's name on the registration sheet and can be printed on each of the cards in the contestant's card packet. The number of cards that each contestant receives should be equal to the number of classes to be judged by the contestant. Using a number and letter system, the contestants can be identified as a team, such as 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D. This is an easy way to divide contestants into four equal groups and to ensure that no two team members judge in the same group.

Tabulation and Recording

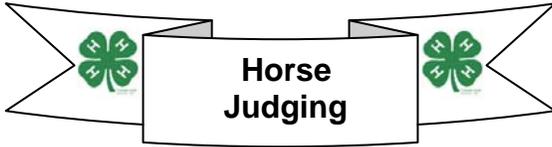
Once all contestants have been properly registered, efforts can then be turned towards tabulation and recording. All tabulation sheets should have the class titles list in the appropriate columns on each sheet. Tabulation of placings can begin when the cards from the first class judged have been turned in along with the official placings and cuts.

There are three means of scoring a placing card. Several computer-based programs have been developed in the last few years. A computer tabulation program developed by the University of Kentucky and the North American International Livestock Exposition is one option. This is a DOS-based program used in scoring all types of judging contests. Another method is using the Hormel Computing Slide. Directions for its use are listed on the front of the slide. When the 24 possible scores have been computed, a key can be made by copying the scores on a regular placing card, which can be used to record a score for any placing card handed in on that class. The third method of scoring a placing card is by longhand. This process requires more time, and the figures should always be double-checked. However, this procedure is relatively simple. Check with your local 4-H Extension office to see which method of tabulation is commonly used in your location.

Participant # _____

Final Score _____

ORAL REASONS SCORESHEET	
Name of Class _____ Contestant Placing _____	
3 = Excellent 2 = Good 1 = Needs Improvement 0 = Didn't Do	
Score	Criteria
-----	<u>Physical Appearance</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approached judge in a confident manner, stood at appropriate distance from judge, maintained good stance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used facial expressions
-----	<u>Delivery</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greeted judge politely, thanked judge before departing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper volume and voice inflection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversational manner (neither timid, nor aggressive)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used correct grammar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used comparative terms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made eye contact (or appeared to)
-----	<u>Content</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included brief overall description of the class as a whole in opening statement (ex "I found it to be a definite two pair class", or "finding the class to contain an obvious top and bottom pair")
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used horsemanlike terminology correctly
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoided using the word "number" and "horse" when making comparisons between horses (ex. "Number 1/Horse 1 was wider at the stifle")
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitioned smoothly from one pair to the next
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoided gender reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granted all 4 horses, then faulted the bottom horse to justify its placement at the bottom of the class
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information accurate and relevant to the class being judged
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closed with reiteration of class placing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judges may add +1 or +2 points for overall presentation to make a total of 50 points
Additional Comments:	



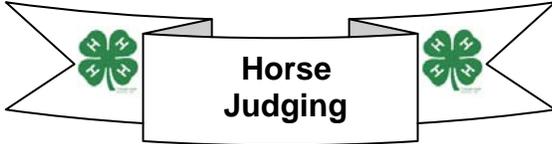
Circle Your Placing

Contestant Number

Class Name

Score

1	2	3	4
1	2	4	3
1	3	2	4
1	3	4	2
1	4	2	3
1	4	3	2
2	1	3	4
2	1	4	3
2	3	1	4
2	3	4	1
2	4	1	3
2	4	3	1
3	1	2	4
3	1	4	2
3	2	1	4
3	2	4	1
3	4	1	2
3	4	2	1
4	1	2	3
4	1	3	2
4	2	1	3
4	2	3	1
4	3	1	2
4	3	2	1



Circle Your Placing

Contestant Number

Class Name

Score

1	2	3	4
1	2	4	3
1	3	2	4
1	3	4	2
1	4	2	3
1	4	3	2
2	1	3	4
2	1	4	3
2	3	1	4
2	3	4	1
2	4	1	3
2	4	3	1
3	1	2	4
3	1	4	2
3	2	1	4
3	2	4	1
3	4	1	2
3	4	2	1
4	1	2	3
4	1	3	2
4	2	1	3
4	2	3	1
4	3	1	2
4	3	2	1