



**University of Idaho**  
**Extension**



## *Idaho 4-H Horse Judging Procedures and Rules*

*(Effective: October 1, 2021)*

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 team work.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Contestants must be currently enrolled in the Idaho 4-H program. All ages as of January 1 of current year. Wherever individual age divisions are referenced: Juniors = 8 to 10, Intermediates = 11 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.

### **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 level, 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. All contestants will remain with their assigned group throughout the contest. Reasons and official placings will be given at a location to be announced.
3. While the contest is in progress, there shall be no conferring between the contestants and anyone else except as directed by the Contest Superintendents or their representatives.
4. No cell phones or other mobile electronic devices will be permitted into the judging contest or reasons contest areas.
5. Hats may be worn at the discretion of the contest officials when judging in an outdoor setting; hats may not be worn when judging indoors or while giving oral reasons.
6. Contestants are responsible for their own writing instruments and notepads for the purpose of taking notes for reasons classes.

7. Up to four halter classes will be judged. Halter 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 halter class. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind, mouth and reproduction.
8. Up to four 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 performance class. Performance horses will be judged as seen (unsoundness to be penalized accordingly).
9. The animals and showmen will be designated by numbers 1-2-3-4.
10. 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.
11. 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 class.
12. 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.
13. Classes will be placed in accordance with the rules of the United States Equestrian Federation or the respective breed association rules, if applicable.
14. All tack and attire will be considered legal. All exhibition riders are encouraged to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet.

## **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.

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

3. The total value of the combined cuts for a class cannot exceed 15. If they total 15, the cut value for the middle pair cannot be greater than 5.

### **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. 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.

### **RECOGNITION**

1. Recognition should be given to the top five (5) individuals within each age division (Junior, Intermediate and Senior).
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** *(for reference only)*

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 not required. Teams may consist of members from the same club, county or multiple counties within that district at the discretion of their district coordinator. Each contestant shall be eligible for individual and team awards.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

<b>E</b> 10-9	<b>G</b> 8-6	<b>F</b> 5-3	<b>N</b> 2-1
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### ORGANIZATION (10)

Introduction  
 Logical Order  
 Pairs Used  
 Conclusion  
 Points Awarded \_\_\_\_\_

<b>E</b> 10-9	<b>G</b> 8-6	<b>F</b> 5-3	<b>N</b> 2-1
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### KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT (20)

Major strengths  
 Weaknesses  
 Important differences  
 Points Awarded \_\_\_\_\_

<b>E</b> 20-16	<b>G</b> 7-11	<b>F</b> 10-6	<b>N</b> 5-1
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### APPROPRIATE TERMS USED (10)

Descriptive adjectives  
 Correct names and parts  
 Points Awarded \_\_\_\_\_

<b>E</b> 10-9	<b>G</b> 8-6	<b>F</b> 5-3	<b>N</b> 2-1
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**E = Excellent**  
**G = Good**  
**F = Fair**  
**N = Needs Improvement**

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by Jim Wilson, Regional Youth Development Educator, in grateful consultation with the Idaho 4-H Horse rules subcommittee comprised of Andrea Thompson, Bobbi Flowers, Cindy Kinder and Sue Walker. Reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Idaho 4-H Youth Horse Council on September 22, 2016; slightly revised 2021.

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