



★ALABAMA EXTENSION★



# 2026 Horse Show Rules Packet



# Table of Contents

**Class List.....3**

- Hunter Division
- Gaited Horse Division
- Showmanship Classes
- Western Division
- Ranch Division
- Speed Events Division

**General Rules and Regulations.....4-9**

- Eligibility of Participants and Horses
- Refunds
- Horse Show/Arena
- Miscellaneous
- Stall Management

**Point System.....10-11**

- Junior and Senior Division High Point and Reserve High Point Rules and Guidelines
- Southern Regional Horse Championships Qualification Policy

**Tack and Attire (all classes).....12-19**

- Tack and Attire (all classes)
- Western and Ranch Division Tack, Attire, and Bits
- Speed Division Tack, Attire, and Bits
- Hunter Division Tack, Attire, and Bits
- Gaited Division Tack, Attire, and Bits

**Class Descriptions and Scoring Systems.....20-46**

- Conformation Classes
- Showmanship Classes
- Western Performance Classes
- Ranch Division
- Speed Division
- Hunter Division
- Gaited Horse Division



# Class List

## SPEED DIVISION

- Arena Race—Junior
- Arena Race—Senior
- Barrel Race—Junior\*
- Barrel Race—Senior\*
- Pole Bending—Junior\*
- Pole Bending—Senior\*
- Stake Race—Junior\*
- Stake Race—Senior\*

## WESTERN PERFORMANCE CLASSES

- Western Trail—Junior\*
- Western Trail—Senior\*
- Stock-Type Ponies—All Ages and Sexes (14.2 hands and under)
- Stock-Type Mares—All Ages\*
- Stock-Type Geldings—All Ages\*
- Western Showmanship—Junior\*
- Western Showmanship—Senior\*
- Walk-Trot Western Pleasure +
- Western Pleasure—Junior\*
- Western Pleasure—Senior\*
- Western Horsemanship—Junior\*
- Western Horsemanship—Senior\*

## HUNTER DIVISION

- Hunter Hack\*
- Hunt Seat Equitation—Fences\*
- Working Hunter\*
- Walk-Trot Hunter Under Saddle +
- Hunter Under Saddle—Junior\*
- Hunter Under Saddle—Senior\*
- Hunt Seat Equitation on the Flat—Junior\*
- Hunt Seat Equitation on the Flat—Senior\*
- Hunter-Type Mares\*
- Hunter-Type Geldings\*
- Hunt Seat Showmanship—Junior\*
- Hunt Seat Showmanship—Senior\*

## GAITED HORSE DIVISION

- Gaited Halter—All Ages and Sexes\*
- Gaited Showmanship—Open\*
- Gaited Pleasure (Non-trotting)—Open\*
- Gaited Equitation (Non-trotting)—Open\*

## RANCH DIVISION

- Ranch Riding—Junior\*
- Ranch Riding—Senior\*
- Walk-Trot Working Western Rail +
- Working Western Rail—Junior\*
- Working Western Rail—Senior\*
- Ranch Ground Handling—Junior\*
- Ranch Ground Handling—Senior\*

**Plus signs (+) denote classes designed for beginner riders. Participants may enter only Walk-Trot classes, Halter, and Showmanship.**

**Asterisks (\*) denote classes that qualify for Southern Regional Horse Championships. The 2026 4-H Horse Show Registration packet will have class numbers and schedule of events.**



# General Rules and Regulations

These rules and regulations contained herein take precedence over any other rules concerning the conduct of the show and participation therein. (1) Extenuating circumstances or safety concerns may require modification of the show rules or operating procedures by show management. (2) It is the responsibility of the exhibitor's parent or guardian to determine if they can participate safely. (3) Show management reserves the right to alter or modify any contest procedures, obstacles, patterns, or rules in this book for safety concerns, show facility restrictions, or other mitigating circumstances. (4) Show management reserves the right to refuse an exhibitor entry into any class or event if they deem that entry is unsafe for the exhibitors or animals. With the exhibitor's safety in mind, any activity or situation deemed unsafe can and will be stopped by show management and may result in disqualification from that class, contest, or state competition.

## ELIGIBILITY OF PARTICIPANTS AND HORSES

1. The competition is open to active members of a chartered Alabama 4-H club with experiential learning in regularly scheduled and planned meetings. Participation is limited to members actively participating in the 4-H program and have been a member for a minimum of 90 days. The Alabama 4-H Horse Project is open to youth 9 through 18. The Alabama 4-H club year begins August 1 and ends July 31. Age eligibility is based on the age of the youth before January 1 of the Alabama 4-H club year. To be eligible for 4-H, the youth must be 9 years old and not older than 18 before January 1 of the Alabama 4-H club year. The Alabama 4-H Age and Eligibility Chart will help families, volunteers, and staff determine the divisions of 4-H membership. For the 4-H Horse program, Junior is any youth ages 9 to 13 by 4-H age, and Senior is any youth ages 14 to 18 by 4-H age.
2. **CODES OF CONDUCT:** All participants will be expected to follow the youth [4-H Code of Conduct](#). All volunteers, staff, parents, and spectators will be expected to follow the adult 4-H Code of Conduct outlined in the volunteer handbook.
3. **SPECIAL NEEDS:** 4-H members with special needs are requested to provide documentation to Nancy Alexander at 231 Duncan Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849; alexana@aces.edu; or (334) 750-0839.
4. **OWNERSHIP/LEASE AGREEMENTS:** Ownership of the equine project animal(s) must be by the 4-H member or an immediate family member, which includes siblings, parents/guardians, or grandparents. However, the Alabama 4-H Horse Program accepts a lease agreement with a non-family member.
5. In either case, the 4-H member is expected to be the primary caretaker and trainer of the animal. Joint ownership or joint leasing of an equine by siblings is allowed with the understanding that no animal may be shown more than once in any given class. Each exhibitor must show their own horse. However, in no case may a horse being shared/leased by non-siblings be eligible for the 4-H Southern Regional Show except in the first class in which the horse/rider qualifies.
6. **STALLIONS:** Stallions are NOT eligible for exhibition in 4-H Horse Show events.
7. **PONIES:** Equines measuring 58 inches (14.2 hands) or less are classified as ponies at the Alabama State 4-H Horse Show.
8. **WALK/TROT:** Walk-Trot classes are designed for beginning riders that are only allowed to compete in other Walk-Trot classes, Halter, and Showmanship. Walk-trot horse and rider combinations will not be allowed entry into any Canter/Loping classes. Riders entering a Walk-Trot class may not enter an alternate horse in any Canter/Loping/Speed classes. Walk-Trot classes are not considered qualifying classes for the Southern Regional Horse Championships.
9. When an exhibitor or exhibitor's parent, guardian, leader, trainer, or agent is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct or misbehavior during the event in or out of the area, the show management may suspend such exhibitor's right to participate in future classes and/or events as deemed appropriate. The show management's and/or judge's decision shall be final and may NOT be protested.
10. All registration, stall assignments, and RV requests must be made during 4HOnline registration. No additional registrations or registration changes will be accepted after 4HOnline registration closes.
11. No 2-year-old may be shown in any performance class before July 1 of its 2-year-old year, except in Showmanship at Halter. Horses must be at least 3 years old to show in Ranch Riding. The minimum age for Halter is 1 year.

12. All equines shown should be well-mannered. A well-mannered horse is a horse that is under the control of the exhibitor while tracking and standing for inspection and is reasonably still and flat-footed while standing for inspection. For purposes of this rule, the term disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to rearing, striking, biting, or backing or falling into others. A judge or show management should disqualify and excuse from the ring before final placing a horse that exhibits disruptive behavior such that it or other horses are unable to be inspected by the judge; exhibits disruptive behavior such that the safety of it, the handler, an exhibitor, a judge, or another horse is endangered; is not under the control of the exhibitor; becomes detached from the exhibitor; has fallen and is on its side with all four feet extended in the same direction; is observed with blood on its body, including but not limited to the nose, chin, mouth, tongue, or gums, regardless of cause; is lame; fails to complete the prescribed pattern correctly in three attempts. Rather than disqualify, a judge may choose to fault a horse exhibiting disruptive behavior so long as such behavior does not qualify as being any of the behaviors described immediately above. If a horse exhibits disruptive behavior described and causes other exhibitor(s) to lose their horse(s), only the initiating horse will be disqualified and excused. The decision of the judge(s) will be final.

## **REFUNDS**

1. **FEE REFUND POLICY:** Refunds will be considered under the following policy:
  - Appropriate documentation is provided by a physician in the event of injury to the 4-H member.
  - Appropriate documentation is provided by a veterinarian in the event of injury to the horse.
  - Full refunds will be considered if requested in writing before 1:00 p.m. on the final day of the show.
  - If requested after 1:00 p.m. on the show's final day, partial refunds will be considered.
  - No stall refunds will be considered.
  - Requests for individual class refunds during the show will not be honored.
2. **CANCELLATION OF CLASSES OR OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING THE SHOW:** Show management reserves the right to adjust the schedule, procedures, and protocols and make cancellations as deemed necessary or appropriate.
3. **EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT:** An EMT or someone trained in emergency medical treatment will be on the grounds (during competition) for the duration of the Alabama State 4-H Horse Show.
4. **LIABILITY:** The Liability Release Statement, part of the entry form, must be completed accurately.

## **HORSE SHOW/ARENA**

1. **JUDGE'S AUTHORITY:** The judge's decision is final in all cases affecting the merits of the equine and/ or the equine/rider combination. The judge has the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment or clothing that, in the judge's opinion, would give an animal or rider an unfair advantage. Individual workouts in any class will be at the discretion of the judge.
2. **PUBLIC ADDRESS (PA) SYSTEM:** The PA system is used to help the show move as smoothly as possible, but is only a courtesy. It is the responsibility of the contestants to know when they are required to be in the make-up area or arena. Not hearing or understanding gate calls is not an excuse for missing one's order of work or class.
3. **GATE CALL:** Youth will be responsible for checking in at the gate area during the class before the one they are entered. Once checked in with the gate, the exhibitor and horse must remain in the holding area until the start of their class. If a youth misses their gate call, they will have 1 minute to enter the arena. If the youth does not enter the arena before the 1-minute time expires, they will be scratched from the class with no refund or substitutions available.
4. **DRESSAGE:** Dressage and Trail will be offered in alternating years. When offered, dressage will be conducted under USEF rules.
5. **WALK/TROT CLASSES:** This is a beginner rider class for the 4-H member. These competitors are ineligible to enter riding classes not designated as walk/trot. (Refer to the class list for ineligible classes.)
6. **OPEN/AT WILL:** Classes designated as Open/At Will are offered for a set period with no designated order of go. This allows for multiple classes to run simultaneously and provides exhibitors the flexibility to change tack or equipment as needed. Exhibitors must check in with the steward before beginning their pattern or test.
7. **BUILT-UP SHOES:** Using built-up shoes is prohibited except in the Saddle Horse classes. Therapeutic pads are allowed when accompanied by a veterinarian's statement.

8. **BOOTS:** The use of slip-on (easy-care) horse boots or related footwear are not considered protective boots and are permissible. Protective boots or leg wraps are only permitted in Western Showmanship, Hunt Seat Equitation on the Flat, and Hunt Seat Equitation Over Fences.
9. **JUMPS:** Jumps used in the Hunter Hack will be 2 feet. The jumps used in other fence classes will not exceed 2 feet 6 inches in height.
10. **JUMP SCHOOLING:** If an exhibitor would like to school the jump course, an opportunity to sign up for a schooling slot on the morning of the Hunter show will be permitted. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis at the show office beginning at a pre-announced time. During the unjudged schooling round, up to two exhibitors per time slot will be allowed 5 minutes in the arena. One parent/coach/trainer per student will be permitted to enter the arena. The parent/coach/trainer must wear closed-toed shoes and will not be allowed to alter the height of any fences. The exhibitor must wear a helmet and appropriate footwear to enter the arena. Otherwise, 4-H members are encouraged to use the provided jumps in the warm-up arena.
11. **COMBINATIONS:** One horse-exhibitor combination may enter only one Conformation class and one Ground Handling/Showmanship class. In the Speed Division, one exhibitor may enter up to two horses per class. Horse-exhibitor combinations may enter both Dressage classes (Training and Western).
12. **STARTING LINE:** Performance and Timed Event entrants must report to the starting line within 1 minute of their first call. The assistant must not cross the arena gate for the time to be allowed. No assistance can be given in the arena. Only the judge, ring steward, and timekeepers may be permitted in the arena. Gates will be closed after the horse-rider combination enters the arena. Timed Events riders will begin at a defined starting point. When the rider begins a run in Speed events, the arena gate will be open unless the exhibitor requests the arena gate be closed. With the exhibitors' safety in mind, horse show managers shall decide on policies for entering and leaving the arena in timed events.
13. **GO ORDER:** All heats and all working orders will be drawn randomly. The working order will be in the official show program or posted before the class. In classes with drawn working orders, horses will work in that order or forfeit their right to compete in that class. The show management reserves the right to change the working orders or class schedules if extenuating circumstances warrant. It is the exhibitor's responsibility to alert show management of any conflicts with the working orders.
14. **PATTERNS:** For any judged class in which a pattern or course is used, the judge or show management shall post any pattern(s) to be worked at least 1 hour before the commencement of the class. If pattern books are distributed to contestants, the responsibility of posting patterns has been met. However, patterns should still be posted to alert exhibitors of changes or confirm no changes. If the judge requires additional work from exhibitors to consider final placing, the pattern will not be posted.
15. **RE-RIDE:** No rerun will be given to any contestant if handicapped by the failure of personal equipment or an accident to the horse or rider. Failure of the timer or similar equipment will void any first run, and another run will be given, regardless of the first run's circumstances, at the management's discretion.
16. **TIE:** In the event of a tie in a timed class (except in Jumping), the contestant declared the winner in a runoff must run the pattern in not more than 2 seconds over their original time, or the runoff must be held again. Ties for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in judged events will be worked off. Ties below 3rd place will be broken at the discretion of the judge and show committee. Any points involved in ties will be evenly split between the tied contestants.
17. **PADDOCK AREA:** No one will be allowed in the paddock area except paddock committee members and participating 4-H members.
18. **PROTESTS:** Protests must be submitted to the announcer or manager of the show. Protests must be submitted in writing using the protest form by the 4-H member filing the protest and accompanied by \$100 cash. The exhibitor or animal and the reason for the protest being filed must be designated. Protests will not be accepted unless they are made before the official results are announced. Protests will be made with the understanding that the protester's name will be made public, and if the Rules Committee does not uphold the protest, the \$100 cash will become the property of the State Show. If the protest is valid, the \$100 cash will be returned to the 4-H member filing the protest.
19. **NON-ENTERED EQUINE:** No non-entered equines are permitted on site at any time.
20. **DRUGS:** Chemical stimulants, depressants, and caustic agents are prohibited and can result in disqualification. All equine are subject to testing. The exhibitor of an animal testing positive will be ineligible the following year.

21. **INHUMANE TREATMENT:** No person shall exhibit any equine that appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn, or overly tired. No person on show grounds, including but not limited to barns, stalls, practice areas, and show arena, may treat an animal in an inhumane manner, which includes but is not limited to the following:
- Placing an object in an animal's mouth to cause undue discomfort or distress.
  - Tying an animal in a manner that causes undue discomfort or distress in a stall or trailer or when lunging or riding.
  - Letting blood from an equine.
  - Using inhumane training techniques or methods.
  - Using inhumane equipment, including but not limited to sawtooth bits, hock hobbles, tack collars, tack hackamores, wire headstalls, or wire curb straps.
22. The judge and/or state equine Extension specialist shall examine and check for lameness in all horses brought into any class. This is essential regardless of whether the competition indicates it is necessary. Obvious lameness shall be cause for disqualification at the judge's and/or state equine Extension specialist's discretion.
23. **RULES COMMITTEE:** Situations not covered by Alabama 4-H Horse Show Rules will be ruled on by the Rules Committee made up of the 4-H program lead, the state equine Extension specialist, and other qualified staff.

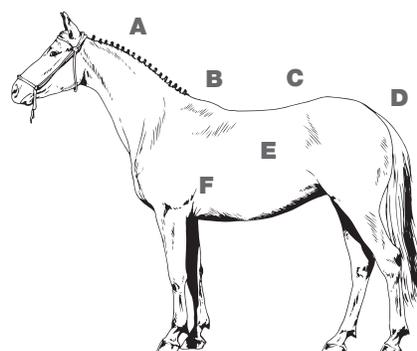
## MISCELLANEOUS

At the 4-H State Horse Show, only the exhibitor registered with the horse may school on the ground (Halter, Showmanship, etc.), longe, or ride the horse. This begins when the horse arrives on show grounds. If a parent, coach, trainer, leader, or individual other than the exhibitor schools or rides the horse on show grounds for any length of time, the exhibitor, the rider (if applicable), and the horse will be disqualified from further participation in the horse show. Many 4-H'ers have friends or family members who want to help hold, groom, saddle, and bridle horses in preparation for classes. This is allowed because family involvement is an important part of the 4-H Horse Project.

1. **CAMPERS:** RV or camper hookups are available for a fee. Fees are payable in 4HOnline registration. Campers will be issued a placard that is to be placed in a visible space to signify how many days' services have been paid for. Campers with no placard in place are subject to having services shut off.
2. **VENDORS:** Vendors are encouraged to support the Alabama State 4-H Horse Show. Some arenas may require a vendor fee. Check with Nancy Alexander for more information.
3. **FARRIER & VETERINARIAN:** A farrier and veterinarian will be on call. Their information and emergency contacts will be released 2 weeks before the show and will be listed in the show program and registration packet.
4. **SUBSTITUTIONS:** Substitutions of animals or entries are not allowed. As stated in the objectives of this program, it is the desire of all the Alabama 4-H Animal Science/Equine programs that youth work with their animals for an appropriate time before showing or exhibiting in a 4-H competition.
5. **HEALTH COMPLICATIONS:** Research shows that health complications, such as heat stress and the stress of traveling and showing can be exacerbated at low body condition scores. Due to concerns for animal welfare and the 4-H objective to educate and promote quality animal husbandry, horses, ponies, and mules shall not be shown at the State Horse Show with a body condition score of less than 4 based on the Henneke scale (ribs easily discernible, tops of spinous process easily discernible, tailhead prominent with hook bones easily discernible, withers accentuated, and neck obviously thin). If you have questions about the body condition score of your horse or if you are not sure your horse will pass inspection, contact your Extension 4-H agent before the State Show. Show management will assess animals in question. If there is a thin horse, management will make a final decision whether to disqualify the animal.

### Henneke System of Body Condition

- A. Along the neck
- B. Along the withers
- C. Loin/crease down the back
- D. Tailhead
- E. Ribs
- F. Behind the shoulder



## Henneke Body Condition Scale

CONDITION	NECK	WITHERS	LOIN	TAILHEAD	RIBS	SHOULDER
1 POOR	Bone structure easily noticeable, animal extremely emaciated, no fatty tissue can be felt	Bone structure easily noticeable	Spinous processes project prominently	Tailhead (pinbone) and hook bones project prominently	Ribs project prominently	Bone structure easily noticeable
2 VERY THIN	Faintly discernible, animal emaciated	Faintly discernible	Slight fat covering over base of spinous processes. Transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes are prominent.	Tailhead prominent	Ribs prominent	Faintly discernible
3 THIN	Neck accentuated	Withers accentuated	Fat buildup halfway on spinous processes but easily discernible. Transverse processes cannot be felt.	Tailhead prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Hook bones appear rounded but are still easily discernible. Pin bones not distinguishable.	Slight fat cover over ribs. Ribs easily discernible.	Shoulder accentuated
4 MODERATELY THIN	Neck not obviously thin	Withers not obviously thin	Negative crease along back	Prominence depends on conformation; fat can be felt. Hook bones not discernible.	Faint outline discernible	Shoulder not obviously thin
5 MODERATE	Neck blends smoothly into body	Withers rounded over spinous processes	Back level	Fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy	Ribs cannot be visually distinguished but can be easily felt	Shoulder blends smoothly into body
6 MODERATELY FLESHY	Fat beginning to be deposited	Fat beginning to be deposited	May have slight positive crease down back	Fat around tailhead feels soft	Fat over ribs feels spongy	Fat beginning to be deposited
7 FLESHY	Fat deposited along neck	Fat deposited along withers	May have positive crease down back	Fat around tailhead is soft	Individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat	Fat deposited behind shoulder
8 FAT	Noticeable thickening of neck, fat deposited along inner buttocks	Area along withers filled with fat	Positive crease down back	Tailhead fat very soft	Difficult to feel ribs	Area behind shoulder filled in flush with body
9 EXTREMELY FAT	Bulging fat. Fat along inner buttocks may rub together. Flank filled in flush	Bulging fat	Obvious positive crease down back	Building fat around tailhead	Patchy fat appearing over ribs	Bulging fat
From: Henneke et al. Equine Vet J. (1983) 15 (4), 371–372						

## **STALL MANAGEMENT**

1. **STALL ASSIGNMENTS:** Stall assignments will be by club and county. Grouping of clubs and/or county must be requested in writing by all involved clubs. Any other arrangements desired must be made in writing by all involved 4-H members and noted during 4HOnline registration.
2. **STALL CARDS:** A stall card identifying the animal, the owner, and the phone number or cell phone number should be posted on each animal's stall during the show. Free stall cards are available at the registration office. This information should be made available upon arrival at the grounds.
3. **BEDDING:** Wood shavings are the only bedding allowed. Each stall reserved will be provided with two bags of shavings. If additional shavings are needed, bring them with you to the show. Limited on-site shaving sales will be available.



# Point System

Number of Entries in Class															
	75-66	65-56	55-46	45-36	35-26	25-10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Place	Points														
1	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
3	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
4	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1			
5	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1				
6	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1					
7	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1						
8	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1							
9	7	6	5	4	3	2	1								
10	6	5	4	3	2	1									
11	5	4	3	2	1										
12	4	3	2	1											
13	3	2	1												
14	2	1													
15	1														

1. Points are calculated by the following procedure: For classes with twenty-five or fewer contestants, each of the first ten horses placed in a class is given one point for each horse placing below it, plus one point. In Gaited, Western, Ranch, and Hunter Divisions, points accumulated are awarded to the rider.
2. 4-H members must participate as individuals in one or more active educational events, passive educational events, horse project record book, and horse event to be eligible for horse/rider high point buckles and awards.

## JUNIOR AND SENIOR DIVISION HIGH POINT AND RESERVE HIGH POINT RULES AND GUIDELINES

One high point individual (champion) and one reserve high point individual (reserve champion) award will be selected in each of the Western, Hunter, Gaited Horse, Ranch Horse, and Speed Event divisions. This division system is based on the division high point system used at the Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championships.

Points in each of these categories will be accumulated on a one-horse, one-rider basis from the exhibitor's performance classes.

In the case of ties for Division High Point or Reserve High Point, the following priority order will be used to determine who receives the award:

1st Tiebreaker: Points earned in the greatest number of classes.

2nd Tiebreaker: Most points earned in all riding classes (all division classes except Showmanship).

3rd Tie Breaker: Points earned in the greatest number of classes (out of all division classes).

4th Tie Breaker: Total number of horses placed over in any one division class.

5th Tiebreaker: The horse with the highest placings in division classes.

These divisions and classes are used to calculate Division High Point and Reserve High Point:

- Western High/Reserve High Point:
  - » Western Showmanship
  - » Western Pleasure
  - » Western Horsemanship
  - » Western Trail
- Ranch High/Reserve High Point:
  - » Ranch Ground handling
  - » Ranch Riding
  - » Working Western Rail
- Hunter High/Reserve High Point:
  - » Hunter Showmanship
  - » Hunter Under Saddle
  - » Hunt Seat Equitation
  - » Working Hunter
  - » Equitation Over Fences
  - » Hunter Hack
- Gaited High/Reserve High Point:
  - » Gaited Showmanship
  - » Gaited Equitation (Non-Trotting)
  - » Gaited Pleasure (Non-Trotting)
- Speed Events High/Reserve High Point:
  - » Pole Bending
  - » Barrel Racing
  - » Stake Race

These classes do not count toward High Point or Reserve High Point:

- Stock Type Mares
- Stock Type Geldings
- Stock Type Ponies
- Walk-Trot Western Pleasure
- Walk-Trot Working Western Rail
- Hunter Type Mares
- Hunter Type Geldings
- Walk-Trot Hunter Under Saddle
- Dressage Training Level
- Gaited Halter
- Western Dressage
- Arena Race

# **SOUTHERN REGIONAL HORSE CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFICATION POLICY**

## **Purpose**

This policy establishes the process for selecting Alabama 4-H delegates to the Southern Regional Horse Championships (Perry, GA) and prioritizes recognition of 4-Hers who demonstrate mastery of 4-H horsemanship skills.

## **Eligibility**

To be eligible, a 4-H member must:

- Be an active Alabama 4-H member in good standing.
- Compete at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show in the same program year.
- Compete in a Southern Regional Horse Championships qualifying class, designated by an asterisk (\*) in the official class list.

## **Qualifying Classes**

- A qualifying class must have at least five (5) entries to be valid.
  - » Gaited classes are exempt from the minimum entries qualification.
- Only classes designated with an asterisk (\*) are considered for qualification. Classes at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show that are not offered at the Southern Regional Horse Championships are not considered for qualification.

## **Automatic Qualification**

Horse/rider pairs automatically qualify under the following conditions:

- First place in any qualifying class (\*) with at least five (5) entries or first place in any qualifying Gaited class regardless of number of entries.
- Second place in any qualifying class (\*) with eight (8) or more entries.

## **At-Large Qualification**

- Up to ten (10) at-large horse/rider pairs may be selected by the Alabama 4-H Horse Show Rules Committee chaired by Reid McGuire, Youth Livestock Education Program Manager.
- Priority for at-large selection will be given to:
  - » High school seniors.
  - » 4-H'ers with documented high performance in 4-H Southern Regional Horse Championships qualifying classes not offered at the Alabama State 4-H Horse Show. Documentation should be provided no later than the closing of the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show. Documentation of scoring and placing should be sent to Reid McGuire, Youth Livestock Education Program Manager at erm0135@auburn.edu or turned in during the 4-H Horse Show to the official show office.
  - » Overall quality and consistency of performance during the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show will be evaluated.

## **Performance Qualification**

Accurate completion and timely submission of a SRHC At-Large Performance Review for Non-State Classes form is required for at-large delegate consideration. This form is available at aces.edu on the 4-H Horse Project page. Completion of the form and/or meeting all criteria does not guarantee an offer to participate at Southern Regionals. Performance qualifications by class (those not offered at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show) are listed below.

Performance Qualifications by Class

- Placed 1st in class of 5 or more or 2nd in class of 8 or more in: Working Cow Horse Boxing Only, Ranch Roping, Ranch Reining, Goat Tying, Western Riding
- Received test score of 60% or higher in: Dressage, Western Dressage

## **Representation Requirement**

All delegates representing Alabama 4-H at Southern Regionals must have competed at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show, regardless of qualification method.

## **Final Authority**

All selections are subject to verification of eligibility and results. Decisions of the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show Rules Committee are final.



# Tack and Attire (all classes)

## TACK AND ATTIRE—ALL CLASSES

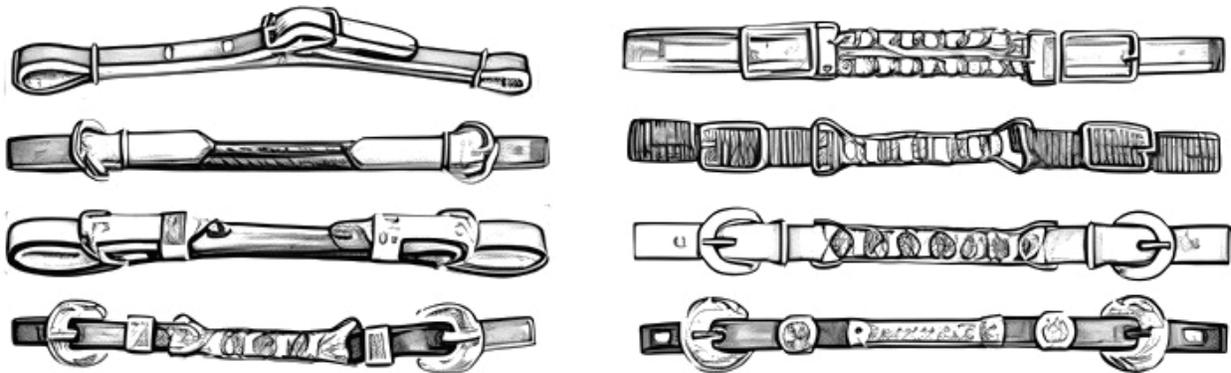
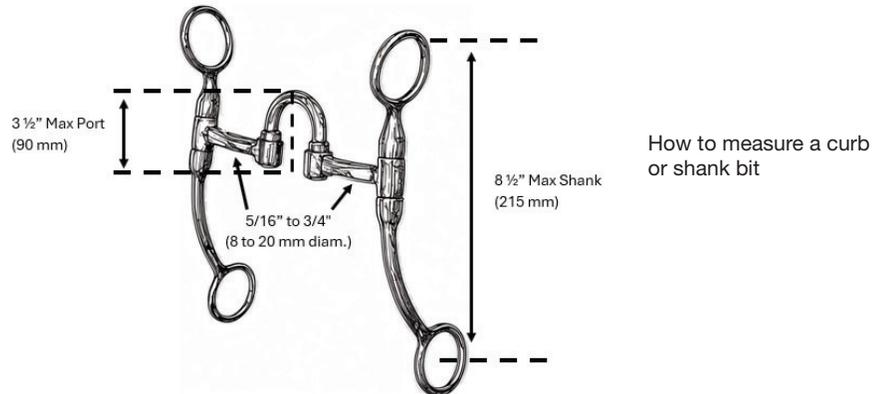
1. **DRESS CODE:** All participants will be expected to follow the 4-H Dress Code. This will be strictly enforced.
2. **HELMETS AND SAFETY ATTIRE:** Riders in all classes are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI-approved equestrian helmet with a fastened chinstrap when showing or schooling. Chinstraps must be fastened. Helmets must be properly sized to fit the 4-H member. Improperly sized helmets are a deterrent to safety. Caps worn under helmets or ill-fitting helmets are grounds for disqualification. Bicycle helmets are not SEI- or ASTM-approved equestrian headgear.
3. Loss of or removal of helmet before exiting the arena will result in disqualification of the 4-H member from that particular class. Helmet use is required when mounted at all times on the show grounds, including all performance classes and divisions. Additionally, this policy is in effect in the show pen as well as in all warm-up/practice pens and on the show grounds when rider is mounted. Helmets must be in place for all mounted pictures. Violation of this policy may result in disqualification from the show and/or removal from show grounds.
4. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor—or the parent, guardian, or trainer of the exhibitor—to ensure that the headgear complies with appropriate safety standards for protective headgear intended for equestrian use and that it is properly fitted and in good condition. The 4-H State Horse Show Committee and officials are not responsible for checking the appropriateness of headgear worn.
5. The 4-H State Horse Show Committee and officials make no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, about any protective headgear and caution riders that death or serious injury may result despite wearing such headgear because all equestrian sports involve inherently dangerous risks and no helmet can protect against all foreseeable injuries.
6. Exhibitors may wear safety attire in any class without judging discrimination. The Alabama State 4-H Horse Program encourages the use of safety vests in all classes.
7. **MARTINGALES/TIE-DOWNS:** Martingales and tie-downs are not allowed except in Speed events and in Equitation Over Fences and Working Hunter. In Speed events, martingales used with curb bits must have rein stops.
8. **RIDER RESTRAINTS:** No exhibitor may be tied, buckled, or fastened in the saddle or stirrups in any manner or by any means during competition or while on the show grounds. This includes the use of Velcro and related products and rubber bands.
9. **BROKEN EQUIPMENT:** Re-rides are not allowed when faulty equipment is used or in the event of the loss of a shoe. Timer malfunction will result in a re-ride being awarded.
10. **PROHIBITED EQUIPMENT:** Wire curb straps, regardless of how padded or covered, or curb strap with tacks/rivets. Any curb strap narrower than one-half inch. Chain, wire, or metal tie-down or bonnets are prohibited, regardless of how padded or wrapped. Belly Bands; saw tooth bits; hock hobbles; tack collars; tack curb straps or tack hackamores; whips used for showmanship; war bridles or like devices; riding in a curb bit without a curb strap; wire or solid metal curb straps no matter how padded; wire cavesson; wire or cable tie-downs; bumper bits; metal bosals (no matter how padded); chambons; headstalls made of metal (no matter how wrapped or padded), twisted rawhide, or rope may not be used on a horse's head (3/8 inch rope may be used with a slip/gag bit or a bonnet); running martingales used with curb bits used without rein stops; draw reins attached between or around the front legs.
11. **ABUSE OR ABUSIVE EQUIPMENT:** The judge or designated show officials have the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment which, in their opinion, is unsafe, tends to give unfair advantage, or is deemed inhumane. Inhumane treatment of a horse identified by show personnel or show management at any time during the State Horse Show on any location on the show grounds may result in disqualification, dismissal, and suspension from further participation in State Horse Show classes. Any horse receiving inhumane treatment while exhibiting may be dismissed upon the discretion of the judge or show official appointed by State Horse Show management.

12. The standard by which conduct or treatment will be measured is that which the show management rules a reasonable person who is informed and experienced in generally accepted equine training and exhibition procedures would determine to be cruel, abusive, or inhumane in accordance with AQHA and USEF.
13. An official of the show may check the appointments of each horse and exhibitor. However, it is the exhibitor's responsibility to be aware of all rules and enter the arena with proper tack and attire. An official may request removal or alteration of any equipment deemed inappropriate prior to the judging of the class. Participants exhibiting with illegal appointments shall be disqualified at the discretion of the judge and/or state equine Extension specialist.
14. In all classes, failure to wear the correct exhibitor number (either on the back only or on both sides of the saddle pad only) will result in disqualification in that specific class.

## **WESTERN AND RANCH DIVISION TACK, ATTIRE, AND BITS**

1. **BRIDLE:** Equine may be shown in hackamores or bridles. Acceptable hackamores, bits, and curb chains are described in the current AQHA Official Handbook of Rules and Regulations.
2. **SADDLE:** Entries must be shown with a stock saddle. Silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit.
3. **ATTIRE:** Riders shall wear tucked-in, long-sleeved western shirts and cowboy boots. Boots may be either pull-on or lace-up style. Tennis shoe-style/type boots are not allowed. Chaps, rope, and spurs are optional.
4. **BOOTS:** The use of slip-on (easy-care) horse boots or related footwear are not considered protective boots and are permissible. Protective boots or leg wraps are only permitted in Western Horsemanship in this division.
5. **ROPE (Ranch Division):** In the event a roping station is included, no lariat will be provided for rider to use.
6. **RANCH HORSE:** No hoof polish and no braided or banded manes/tails or tail extensions. Trimming inside the ears is discouraged; trimming bridle path, fetlocks, and excessive (long) facial hair is allowed.
7. **RANCH TACK:** Equipment with silver should not count over a good working outfit. Excessive silver on bridles and saddles is discouraged.
8. **HORSE AGE:** Western and Ranch horses are classified as either junior or senior horses based on age as per AQHA.
  - Junior horses are age 5 years and younger. Junior horses may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit.
  - Senior horses are age 6 years and older. Senior horses may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit.
9. **WESTERN BITS:** The following information on western bits is for educational purposes. Random bit checks may be conducted by the judge, steward, or show management if they feel it is necessary.
  - Snaffle bits in Western Performance classes mean the conventional O-ring, egg-butt, or D-ring with a ring no larger than 4 inches in diameter (100 mm). The inside circumference of the ring must be free of rein, curb, or headstall attachments that would provide leverage. The mouthpiece should be round, oval, or egg-shaped smooth and unwrapped metal. It may be inlaid, but smooth or latex wrapped. The bars must be a minimum of 5/16 inch (8 mm) in diameter, measured 1 inch (25 mm) in from the cheek with a gradual decrease to center of the snaffle. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece connecting ring of 1 inch (32 mm) or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8 to 3/4 inch (10 mm to 20 mm) measured top to bottom, with a maximum length of 2 inches (50 mm), which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable. Optional leather strap attached below the reins on a snaffle bit is acceptable.
  - Reference to curb bits means there is a solid or broken mouthpiece, has shanks, and acts with leverage. All curb bits must be free of mechanical device and should be considered a standard western bit.

- A description of a legal, standard bit includes the following:
  - » 8-inch (215 mm) maximum length shank to be measured. Shanks may be fixed or loose.
  - » On mouthpieces, bars must be round, oval, or egg-shaped smooth and unwrapped metal of 5/16 to 3/4 inch (8 to 20 mm) in diameter, measured 1 inch (25 mm) from the cheek. However, wire on the sway bars (above the bars and attaching to the spade) of a traditional spade bit is acceptable. They may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. Nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar), such as extensions or prongs, including upward prongs on solid mouthpieces. The mouthpiece (bar) may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, connecting ring of 1 inch (32 mm) or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8 to 3/4 inch (10 to 20 mm) measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2 inches (50 mm), which lies flat in the horse's mouth, is acceptable. A linked mouthpiece with minimum 3/8-inch (10 mm) diameter that is smooth with movable links that are solidly attached to the shanks is legal.
  - » The port must be no higher than 3 inches (90 mm) maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, half-breeds, and spades are standard.
  - » A curb bit must be used with a curb strap or curb chain properly attached to make contact with horse's chin. Chain curb straps must be at least 1/2 inch in width and lie flat with no twisted links, against the jaw of the horse. Curb chains cannot be tied to the bit with string or cord. No wire curbs, regardless of how taped or padded. No rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.



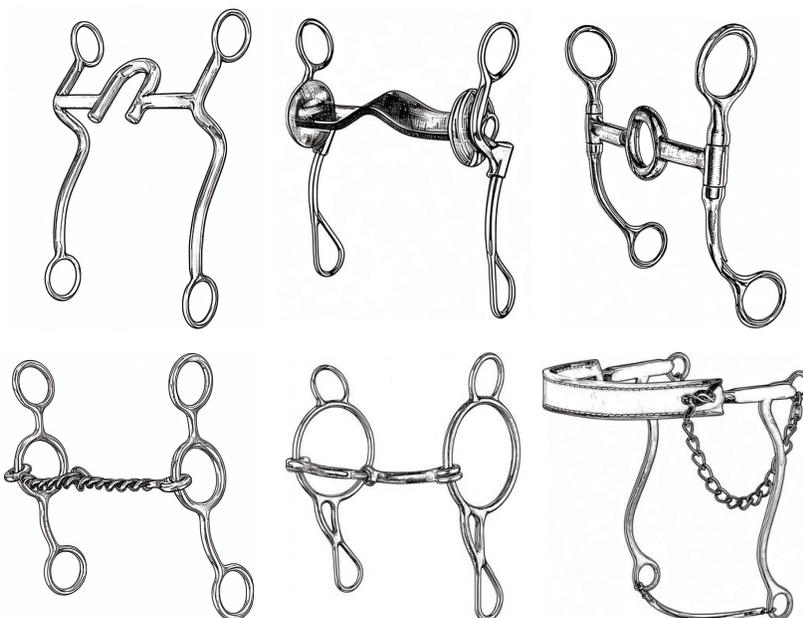
Shown are some legal curb chains/straps. Each is at least 1/2 inch in width and lies flat against the jaw. They cannot be tied with string or cord.



Shown are some illegal curb chains/straps. Upper row, left to right: too thin and doesn't lay flat; ties on and doesn't lay flat. Bottom row, left to right: rounded soft rope doesn't lay flat; rawhide knot doesn't lay flat.

## WESTERN AND RANCH DIVISION BITS AND REINS

1. References to hackamore mean the use of a nonmechanical flexible, braided rawhide or leather or rope bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable. No rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered. Only nonmechanical hackamores, such as flexible, braided rawhide or leather or rope bosal, is permitted for junior horses in Western and Ranch Divisions. Slip or gag bits and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.
2. Slip or gag bits and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.
3. Split reins or romal reins must be used on a curb bit except in Speed events.
4. As per AQHA, junior horses are ages 5 years and younger. Junior horses may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit.
  - Junior horses that are shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit may be ridden with one or two hands on the reins. When exhibiting in a snaffle bit or hackamore, an exhibitor may switch between two hands and one hand on the reins at any time. The rider's hands should be carried near the pommel and not farther than 4 inches out on either side of the saddle horn. Rider's hands must be visible to the judges at all times.
5. Horses 6 years and older may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit. Only one hand may be used on the reins, and the hand must not be changed. When using a curb or shank bit with split reins or a snaffle bit with one hand, only the index finger is permitted between the reins.
6. Except for junior horses shown with hackamore/snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, and the hand must not be changed. The hand is to be around the reins. The index finger only between split reins is permitted. In Trail and Ranch Trail, it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle. Violation of this rule is an automatic disqualification.



The bits shown on the top line are illegal. Left to right, they are prong, flat polo, and donut mouthpiece.

The bits along the bottom line are illegal in the Western Division, but legal in Speed. Left to right, they are junior cowhorse, wonder bit, and leather mechanical hackamore.

7. Romal means an extension of braided or round material attached to closed reins. This extension shall be carried in the free hand with a 16-inch (40 cm) spacing between the reining hand and the free hand holding the romal. When using romal reins, the rider's hand shall be around the reins with the wrists kept straight and relaxed, the thumb on top and the fingers closed lightly around the reins. When using a romal, no fingers between the reins are allowed. The free hand may not be used to adjust the rider's length of rein in any reining class. During reining, the use of the free hand while holding the romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand is considered to be the use of two hands and a score of 0 will be applied, with the exception of any place a horse is allowed to be completely stopped during a pattern. In all Western classes, excess rein(s) may be straightened or disentangled anytime during the class, provided the rider's free hand used to straighten or disentangle remains behind the rein hand. Any attempt to alter tension or length of the reins from bridle to rein hand is to be considered use of two hands and a penalty score of zero or disqualification will be applied. The romal shall not be used forward of the cinch or to signal or cue the horse in any way. Any infraction of this rule shall be penalized severely by the judge.
8. Except in classes where noted, reins will be held in one hand and cannot be changed during performance. One hand to be around reins when romal type reins are used. When using a shank bit with split reins or a snaffle bit with one hand, only one finger permitted between the reins. In all Western classes, excess reins may be straightened or disentangled anytime during the class, provided the rider's free hand used to straighten or disentangle remains behind the rein hand. Any attempt to alter tension or length of the reins from the bridle to rein hand is to be considered use of two hands and a penalty score of zero or disqualification will be applied. Horses may be shown in a snaffle bit or hackamore with one or both hands on both reins. The tails of the reins must be crossed on the opposite side of the neck when riding with two hands on split reins. Closed reins (for example, mecate) may not be used with a snaffle bit. Riders' hands should be carried near the pommel and not farther than 4 inches out on either side of the saddle horn with very limited movement.

## **SPEED DIVISION TACK, ATTIRE, AND BITS**

1. ATTIRE: Clothing should be clean and neat. Shirts with a collar and long sleeves are required along with western boots. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor or the parent or guardian or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance. No exhibitor may be tied, buckled or fastened into the saddle in any manner or by any means during competition. Rubber bands, Velcro, or similar are not allowed in any Speed Class. Stirrup, stirrup leathers, or any part of the fender should not be attached by any means to the cinch, breastplate, saddle, horse, or anywhere other than where it is normally attached to the saddle.
2. TACK: Western saddles will be used. A mechanical hackamore or other bridles can be used. However, the judge or appointed equipment official may prohibit the use of bits or equipment considered to be severe. Nosebands and tie-downs are allowed in Speed events; however, these cannot have any bare metal in contact with the horse's head.
  - References to hackamore mean the use of either a mechanical or nonmechanical hackamore.
    - » Nonmechanical: Flexible, braided rawhide or leather, or rope bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable.
    - » Mechanical: The core may be any flexible cable, rawhide, or metal material, and must be covered with leather, soft plastic tubing, or similar material for padding.
  - For either type of hackamore, no rigid material will be permitted over the nose or under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.
  - Slip or gag bits will be allowed provided that the mouthpiece and shank requirements/limitations are met as described in the Western Division section.
3. BITS/CURB CHAINS: A curb bit must be used with a curb strap or curb chain properly attached to make contact with horse's chin. Chain curb straps must be at least ½ inch in width and lie flat with no twisted links, against the jaw of the horse. Curb chains cannot be tied to the bit with string or cord. No wire curbs, regardless of how taped or padded. No rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered. Slip and gag bits are allowed in Speed events. Sawtooth mouthpieces are not permitted.
4. Horses of any age may be shown with a snaffle bit.
5. Riders may use two hands on the reins regardless of bit type and age of horse. Split, romal, roping, and running/barrel reins are permitted in the Speed Division.

6. TIE-DOWNS/MARTINGALES/ETC.: Martingales and draw reins are permitted for Speed events; however, martingales used with curb bits must have rein stops. Draw reins may not be attached between or around the front legs. Bonnets (tie-down that goes over the poll and/or across the forehead) made of rope, flat nylon webbing or leather only (minimum 3/8 inch diameter) are permitted. Chain, wire, or metal tie-downs or bonnets are prohibited regardless of how padded or wrapped.
7. GENERAL SPEED DIVISION RULES: Each contestant will enter the arena from within a designated area behind the arena gate. Arena conditions and show management will determine where the run will begin and end.
8. The contestant is allowed a running start from the designated starting point. Timing shall begin as soon as the horse reaches the starting line and will be stopped when the horse passes over the finish line. A closed gate finish will be used.
9. An electric timer, when accessible, will be the official time. Otherwise, at least two watches shall be used, with the average time of the two watches to be the official time. Starting line markers or electric timers, when possible, shall be placed against the arena fence.
10. The judge and/or state equine extension specialist may disqualify a contestant for excessive use of a bat, crop, whip, reins or rope anywhere on the horse.
11. In the event of a tie, the horse declared the winner in the runoff must re-run the pattern within two seconds of its original time or the runoff must be held again. Penalty time will not apply to the two-second rule but will apply to the final runoff time.
12. In the event of show management problems (i.e., timer malfunction), the contestant will receive a rerun. The contestant shall have the option of performing the rerun immediately or electing to move to the end of the class and rerun.
13. No assistance, to either horse or rider, is permitted past the arena gate.

## **HUNTER DIVISION TACK, ATTIRE, AND BITS**

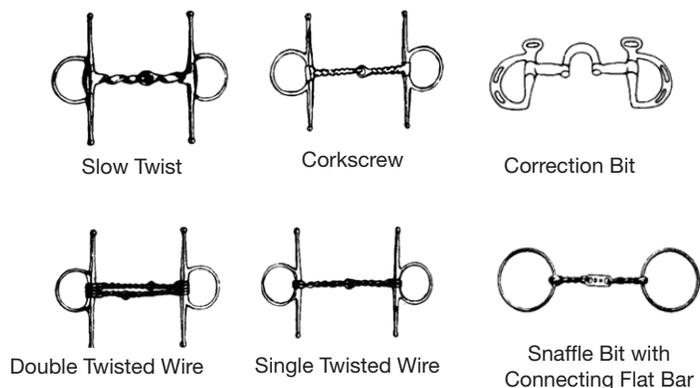
1. BRIDLE/BITS: The bridle should suit the animal and the event. Legal bits and equipment acceptable for Hunt Seat jumping and Dressage are described by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF). Visit the USEF website at <https://www.usef.org/>.
2. SADDLE: Hunt Seat exhibitors must show in a forward seat (hunting) saddle or Dressage saddle.
3. ATTIRE: Traditional style hunt coats in conservative colors, breeches (or jodhpurs), and English hunt boots (or jodhpur boots) should be worn. A stock tie, tie, or choker is required. Hair should be neat and contained. Unrowelled spurs, crops, bats, and gloves are optional.
4. BOOTS: The use of slip on (easy-care) horse boots or related footwear are not considered as protective boots and are permissible. Protective boots or leg wraps are only permitted in Hunt Seat Equitation on the Flat and Hunt Seat Equitation Over Fences.
5. DRESSAGE: Dressage/Western Dressage and Trail classes will be offered in alternating years. In years Dressage/Western Dressage is not offered at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show, exhibitors may complete and submit a Southern Regionals At-Large Performance Review for Non-State Classes form if they have competed in Dressage at a show they attended in the same program year, receiving a test score of 60% or higher. Dressage bits may be checked. The following information on hunt seat bits is for educational purposes. Random bit checks may be conducted by the judge, steward, or show management if they feel it is necessary.

### **ALL HUNTER CLASSES, EXCEPT DRESSAGE**

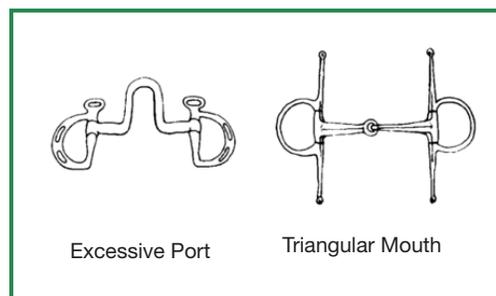
1. An English snaffle (no shank), kimberwick, pelham, or full bridle (Weymouth and bradoon) must be used. If a bit is used that requires two reins, it may not be used with a converter. Snaffle bit rings may be no larger than 4 inches in diameter.
2. In reference to mouthpieces, nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar). Solid and broken mouthpieces must be between 5/16 to 3/4 inch in diameter, measured 1 inch from the cheek, and may have a port no higher than 1 inch.
  - Smooth round, oval or egg-shaped, and straight bar or solid mouthpieces are allowed. They may be smooth inlaid, synthetic wrapped (including rubber or plastic), or encased. Waterford bits are allowed. Snaffle bits with slow twist, corkscrew, or single twisted wire mouthpieces are allowed.

- Leather bits to be solid, smooth, rolled leather 5/8 to 3/4 inch (15 to 20 mm) measured 1 inch from cheek with no port. On broken mouthpieces only, connecting rings of 1 1/4 inches (32 mm) or less in diameter or connecting flat bar of 3/8 to 3/4 inch (10 to 20 mm) measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2 inches (50 mm), which lie flat in the horse's mouth, are acceptable.
  - On broken mouthpieces, connecting rings of 1 inch or less in diameter or connecting flat bar of 3/8 to 3/4 inch (measured top to bottom) that lies flat in the horse's mouth, or rollers are acceptable.
3. Any bit having a fixed rein requires the use of a curb chain. The curb chain must be at least 1/2 inch wide and lie flat against the jaw of the horse.
  4. Triangle (knife-edge), true gag action, and elevator bits are not allowed.
  5. Nonmechanical hackamores are not considered legal in any Hunter class. Mechanical hackamores, in which the core may be any flexible cable, rawhide, or metal material that must be covered with leather, soft plastic tubing, or a similar material for padding, are not legal in Hunter Hack, Working Hunter, or Hunt Seat Equitation Over Fences classes.
  6. Plain leather browbands and cavesson nosebands must be used. No figure eight or flash cavessons are acceptable, with the exception of flash cavessons for Dressage.
  7. Martingales are permitted in Equitation Over Fences and Working Hunter. Martingales should not be used in Hunter Under Saddle, Hunt Seat Equitation, or Hunter Hack.

Acceptable English Bits

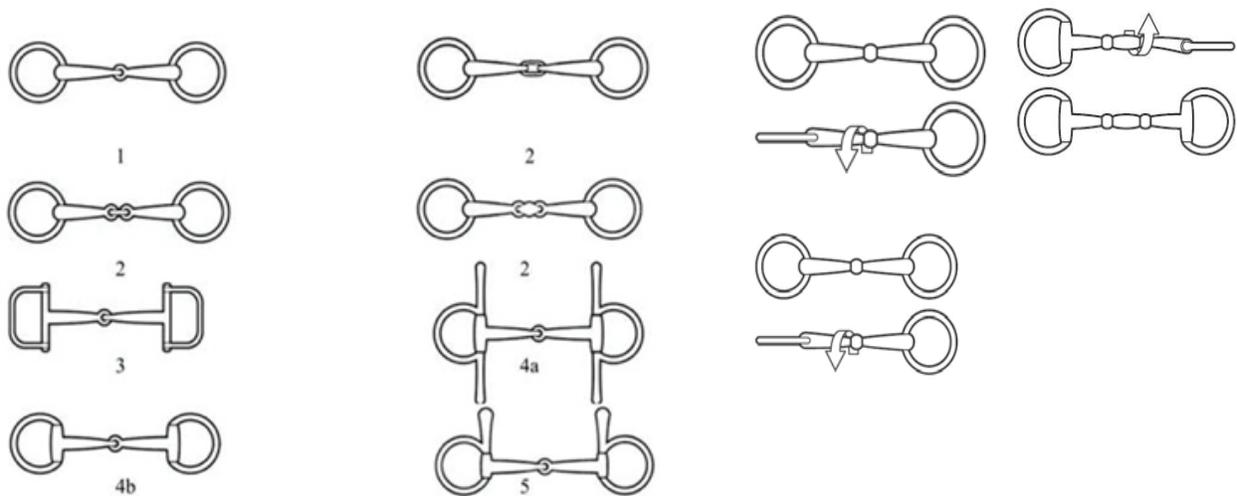


Unacceptable English Bits



## DRESSAGE

8. All bits must be smooth with a solid surface. Twisted, wire, and roller bits are prohibited. A bushing or coupling is permitted as the center link in a double-jointed snaffle; however, the surface of the center piece must be solid with no movable parts. The mouthpiece of a snaffle may be shaped in a slight curve, but ported snaffles are prohibited.
9. Bits must be made of metal or rigid plastic and may be made with a rubber, plastic, or leather covering; flexible rubber bits are not permitted. Bits may not be modified by adding latex or other material. Bits with mouthpieces made of synthetic material are permitted, provided that the contours of the bit conform to the contours of one of the bits pictured.
10. The diameter of the snaffle mouthpiece must be a minimum 3/8-inch diameter at rings or cheeks of the mouthpiece.
  - Ordinary snaffle with single-jointed mouthpiece
  - Ordinary snaffle with double-jointed mouthpiece
  - Racing snaffle (D-ring)
  - (a) Snaffle with cheeks, with or without keepers.
  - (b) Without cheeks (egg-butt)
  - Snaffle with upper or lower cheeks
  - Unjointed snaffle (Mullen-mouth)
  - Snaffle with cheeks (Hanging or drop cheek; Baucher). This may be a D-ring or other ordinary snaffle as pictured in numbers 1 to 6.
  - Dr. Bristol
  - Fulmer
  - French snaffle
  - Snaffle with rotating mouthpiece
  - Rotary bit



## GAITED DIVISION TACK, ATTIRE, AND BITS

1. APPOINTMENTS: All tack, bits, equipment, shoeing regulations, and attire that are accepted in the respective breed association and/or USEF will be permitted.
2. All Gaited (non-trotting) entries may be subject to inspection following the Walking Horse Owners Association (WHOA) guidelines for shoeing and inspection.
3. As such:
  - Bit shanks should not exceed 9½ inches in length measured from the top of the metal to the bottom of the metal, including the rings.
  - Cross chain cavessons are prohibited.
  - Hoof bands are prohibited in all classes.
  - The maximum hoof toe length is 5 inches, exclusive of the shoe, measured from the coronet band at the center of the hoof along the front of the hoof wall to the bottom of the hoof.
  - The maximum shoe size is 1½ inches by ½ inch (classic park shoe) for any class.
  - Tungsten metal (in whole or in part) is prohibited.
  - Only clear grooming products are allowed for use as hoof polish. Black or opaque hoof polish is prohibited.



# Class Descriptions and Scoring Systems

The Alabama 4-H State Horse Show has many diverse classes. This document provides descriptions of the classes that may be offered. Some classes are generic across species and disciplines and are judged based on breed standards and type regardless of discipline (i.e., Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat, or Western/Stock Type).

## CONFORMATION CLASSES

All Halter classes are judged based on breed standards and type regardless of discipline (i.e., Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat, or Western). Horses will be evaluated on quality of conformation and movement. All exhibitors will be asked to show horse in-hand at the walk and second gait (trot/jog/intermediate gait).

1. The exhibitors' attire must conform to the requirements of their respective divisions (refer to Western, Hunter, or Saddle/Gaited divisions). For example, if an exhibitor is in western attire, then hats and boots are required. Hats would be optional in Saddle/Gaited, Arabian, and nonstock-type Other Breeds. Helmets are optional but are considered appropriate headcover for Conformation classes.
2. Horses are judged on conformation, condition, heritable defects, soundness, and way of going at the judge's discretion.
3. Horses are judged individually standing, at a walk, and at trot or favorite gait.
4. Horses may be shown in halters made of leather, rope, or other suitable material. For Hunter and Gaited classes, horse may be shown in a halter or bridle.
5. Chain use is optional but may only be adjusted under the chin and must lay flat. It is highly recommended to accustom horses and youth to proper chain use.
6. Whips or bats of any type are not permitted in Hunter type and Stock type classes. Whips less than 4 feet in length, including the popper, are permitted in Gaited classes. Protective boots, leg wraps and bandages are prohibited.
7. Horses will be handled and shown by one club member only.
8. Horses should enter the ring as specified by the official. Subsequent procedures will be as directed by the judge and/or ring steward. When the top twelve horses are placed, the ring steward will line them up in order of placing so the public may see how the horses placed.
9. Horses can be entered and shown in only one Conformation or In-Hand (Halter) class.

## SHOWMANSHIP CLASSES

The ideal Showmanship performance consists of a poised, confident, neatly attired exhibitor leading a well-groomed and conditioned horse that quickly and efficiently performs the requested pattern with promptness, smoothness, and precision. Only the exhibitor is judged. The horse is merely a prop to show the exhibitor's ability to fit and show a horse or pony. The system of showing used will be the general standard for that breed.

1. Exhibitor and equipment:
  - Personal appearance of 4-H member: neat, clean, well-groomed, attentive, courteous and in appropriate attire for their discipline. Helmets are optional but are considered appropriate head cover for Conformation classes.
  - Equipment:
    - » Hunter: Clean, adjusted and acceptable hunter bridle or halter.
    - » Gaited: Clean, adjusted halter (English or Western style halter)
    - » Western: Clean, adjusted halter to fit the horse. Fancy halters shall not be given preference over good working halters. Chain use is optional but may only be adjusted under the chin and must lay flat. It is highly recommended to accustom horses and youth to proper chain use.
    - » All divisions: Crops, bats, dressage whips etc. will not be allowed. War bridles or like devices, or any type of wire or rope over a horse's head will not be allowed.

2. Horse (Fitting and Grooming):
  - The horse should be clean, well-groomed and fitted for its type.
  - The horse's feet should be cleaned and either trimmed or properly shod.
3. Leading
  - The exhibitor should enter the ring leading the animal at an alert gait according to the judge's directions.
  - The exhibitor should walk at the animal's left side, holding the reins or lead line in the right hand, according to the breed being shown.
  - The remaining portion of the reins or lead line should be held neatly and safely in the left hand.
  - The animal should lead readily at the walk and second gait.
  - The judge will line up the class with the aid of the ring steward.
4. Posing
  - When posing your horse, stand toward the front facing the horse, but always in a position where you can keep your eye on the judge.
  - Pose your horse according to the breed being shown.
  - Do not crowd the exhibitor next to you.
  - Be natural. Overshowing, undue fussing, and maneuvering are objectionable.
5. Poise, Alertness, and Merits
  - Keep alert and be aware of the position of the judge at all times.
  - Don't be distracted by persons or things outside the ring.
  - Respond quickly to requests from the judge and officials.
  - Recognize the faults of your horse quickly and correct them.
  - Keep showing until the entire class has been placed and excused from the ring unless the judge has instructed otherwise.
6. It is mandatory that the judge post any pattern(s) to be worked at least 1 hour before the commencement of the class; however, if the judge requires additional work of exhibitors for consideration of final placing, the finals pattern may not be posted. Pattern(s) should be designed to test the showman's ability to effectively present a horse to the judge. All ties will be broken at the judge's discretion.
7. All exhibitors may enter the ring and then work individually, or each exhibitor may be worked from the gate individually. When exhibitors are worked individually from the gate, a working order is required. The following maneuvers are considered acceptable: lead the horse at a walk, jog, trot, or extended trot (or favorite gait for Saddle Horses only), or back in a straight or curved line, or a combination of straight and curved lines; stop; and turn 90 (1/4), 180 (1/2), 270 (3/4), 360 (full turn) degrees or any combination or multiples of these turns. The judge must have exhibitors set the horse up squarely for inspection sometime during the class.
8. The exhibitor's overall poise, confidence, appearance, and position throughout the class and the physical appearance of the horse will be evaluated.
9. Appropriate attire must be worn. Clothes and person are to be neat and clean. The use of any type of artificial aid including but not limited to lighters, hay, dirt, sharp pins, etc., will be considered a disqualification.
10. Exhibitors should be poised, confident, courteous, and genuinely sportsmanlike at all times, quickly recognizing and correcting faults in the positioning of the horse. The exhibitor should continue showing the horse until the class has been placed or he/she has been excused unless otherwise instructed by the judge. The exhibitor should appear business-like, stand and move in a straight, natural, and upright manner, and avoid excessive, unnatural, or animated body positions.
11. The exhibitor must lead on the horse's left side holding the lead shank in the right hand near the halter with the tail of the lead loosely coiled in the left hand unless requested by the judge to show the horse's teeth. It is preferable that the exhibitor's hand not be on the snap or chain portion of the lead continuously. The excess lead should never be tightly coiled, rolled, or folded. When leading, the exhibitor should be positioned between the eye and the midpoint of the horse's neck, referred to as the leading position.
12. Both arms should be bent at the elbow with the elbows held close to the exhibitor's side and the forearms held in a natural position. The height of the arms may vary depending on the size of the horse and exhibitor, but the arms should never be held straight out with the elbows locked.

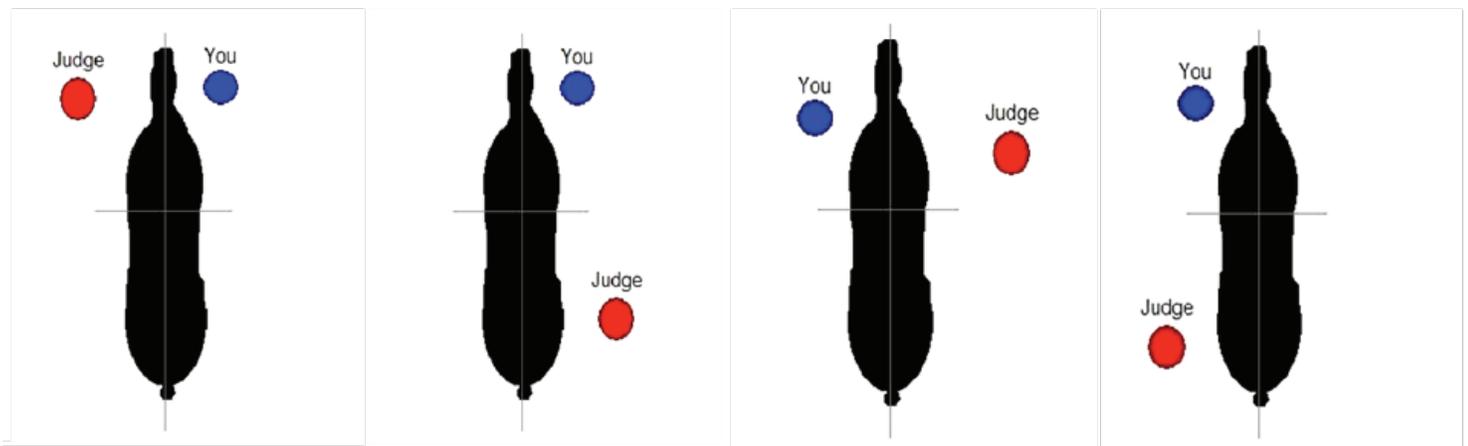
13. The position of the exhibitor when executing a turn to the right is the same as the leading position except that the exhibitor should turn and face toward the horse's head and have the horse move away from him/ her to the right.
14. When executing a back, the exhibitor should turn from the leading position to face toward the rear of the horse with the right hand extended in front of the exhibitor's chest, still maintaining a slight bend in the elbow, and walk forward. The ideal position is for the exhibitor's left shoulder to be in alignment with the horse's left front leg.
15. When setting the horse up for inspection, the exhibitor should stand angled toward the horse in a position between the horse's eye and muzzle and should never leave the head of the horse. The exhibitor is required to use the Quarter Method when presenting the horse. The exhibitor should maintain a position that is safe for himself/herself and the judge. The position of the exhibitor should not obstruct the judge's view of the horse and should allow the exhibitor to maintain awareness of the judge's position at all times. The exhibitor should not crowd other exhibitors when setting up side-by-side or head-to-tail. When moving around the horse, the exhibitor should change sides in front of the horse with minimal steps and should assume the same position on the right side of the horse that he/ she had on the left side.
16. Leading, backing, turning, and initiating the setup should be performed from the left side of the horse. At no time should the exhibitor stand directly in front of the horse. The exhibitor should not touch the horse with his/her hands or feet or visibly cue the horse by pointing his/her feet at the horse during the setup.
17. The horse's body condition and overall fitness should be assessed. The hair coat should be clean, well- brushed, and in good condition. The mane, tail, forelock, and wither tuft may not contain ornaments (ribbons, bows, etc.), but may be braided or banded for English or Western. The length of mane and tail may vary, as long as they are neat, clean, and free of tangles. The mane should be even in length or may be roached, but the forelock and tuft over the withers must be left. The bridle path, eyebrows, and long hair on the head and legs may be clipped, except where government regulations prohibit.
18. Hooves should be properly trimmed, and if shod, the shoes should fit correctly and clinches should be neat. Hooves must be clean and may be painted black or with hoof dressings or shown naturally.
19. Tack should fit properly and be neat, clean, and in good repair.
20. The exhibitor should perform the work accurately, precisely, smoothly, and with a reasonable amount of speed. Increasing speed of the work increases the degree of difficulty; however, accuracy and precision should not be sacrificed for speed. The horse should lead, stop, back, turn, and set up willingly, briskly, and readily with minimal visible or audible cuing. A severe disobedience will not result in a disqualification but should be penalized severely, and the exhibitor should not place above an exhibitor who completes the pattern correctly. Excessive schooling or training, willful abuse, loss of control of the horse by the exhibitor, failure to follow prescribed pattern, or knocking over or working on the wrong side of the cones shall be cause for disqualification.
21. The horse should be led directly to and away from the judge in a straight or curved line and track briskly and freely at the prescribed gait as instructed. The horse's head and neck should be straight and in line with the body.
22. The stop should be straight, prompt, smooth, and responsive with the horse's body remaining straight.
23. The horse should back up readily with the head, neck, and body aligned in a straight or curved line as instructed.
24. On turns of greater than 90 degrees, the ideal turn consists of the horse pivoting on the right hind leg while stepping across and in front of the right front leg with the left front leg. An exhibitor should not be penalized if the horse performs a pivot on the left hind leg, but an exhibitor whose horse performs the pivot correctly should receive more credit.
25. A pull turn to the left is an unacceptable maneuver.
26. The horse should be set up quickly with the feet squarely underneath the body. The exhibitor does not have to reset a horse that stops square.

## **SUGGESTED SCORING**

- Exhibitors are to be scored from 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Patterns will be divided into 6 to 10 maneuvers, as specified by the judge, and each maneuver will be scored from plus 3 to minus 3 with 1/2-point increments acceptable that will be added or subtracted from 70. Maneuver scores should be determined independent of penalties and should reflect equal consideration of both performance of the exhibitor's pattern and the horsemanship form and effectiveness of the exhibitor to result in the following scores: -3 extremely poor, -2 very poor, -1 poor, 0 average or correct, +1 good, +2 very good, +3 excellent. Exhibitors overall horsemanship form and effectiveness should also be scored from 0 to 5 with 0 to 2 average, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent.

- Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are to be determined independently. The following penalties will be applied for each occurrence and will be deducted from the final score:
  - » 3 points: Break of gait at the walk or trot up to 2 strides, over or under turning up to 1/8 of a turn, ticking or hitting a cone, sliding a pivot foot, lifting a pivot foot during a pivot and replacing it in the same place, lifting a foot in a setup and replacing it in the same place after presentation.
  - » 5 points: Not performing the specific gait or not stopping within 10 feet (3 meters) of designated location, break of gait at walk or trot for more than 2 strides, splitting the cone (cone between the horse and exhibitor), horse stepping out of or moving the hind end significantly during a pivot or turn, horse stepping out of the setup after presentation, horse resting a foot or hipshot in a setup, over or under turning 1/8 to 1/4 turn.
  - » 10 points: Exhibitor is not in the required position during inspection, exhibitor touching the horse or kicking or pointing their feet at the horse's feet during the setup, standing directly in front of the horse, loss of lead shank, holding chain or two hands on shank, blatant disobedience including biting, kicking, rearing, or pawing, or horse continually circling exhibitor.
- Disqualifications (should not be placed) include loss of control of horse that endangers exhibitor, other horses, or judge; horse becomes separated from exhibitor; failure to display correct number; willful abuse, excessive schooling or training; use of artificial aids; illegal equipment; off pattern, including knocking over or wrong side of cone or marker; never performing designated gait; over or under turning more than 1/4 turn.

Exhibitor Position: The area around the horse is divided into four quadrants as shown below. When the horse is in the posed position and the judge walks past or around the horse, the exhibitor should position himself/herself in the appropriate quadrant. The handler should be in the quadrant adjacent to the quadrant the judge is occupying.



## WESTERN PERFORMANCE CLASSES

### PERSONAL

1. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parents or guardian, or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance.
2. Entries must be shown with a stock saddle. Silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. Riders shall wear tucked-in, long-sleeved Western shirt and cowboy boots. Boots may be either pull-on or lace-up style. Tennis shoe-style/type boots are not allowed. Chaps and spurs are optional.
3. For more specifics on tack and equipment requirements, see the Western and Ranch Division Tack, Attire, and Bits section.

### GAITS

- The **back up** displays balanced and smooth flowing movements. The horse should back straight with self-carriage without gapping the mouth with light contact and without hesitation.
- The **walk** is a natural, flat-footed, four-beat gait. The horse must move straight and true at the walk. The walk must be alert, with a stride of reasonable length in keeping with the size of the horse.

- The **jog** is a smooth, ground-covering two-beat diagonal gait. The horse works from one pair of diagonals to the other pair. The jog should be square, balanced and with straight, forward movement of the feet. Horses walking with their back feet and trotting in the front are not considered performing the required gait. When asked to extend the jog, it moves out with the same smooth way of going.
- The **moderate extended jog** as an obvious lengthening of stride with a slight increase in pace while exerting less effort and appears smooth to ride.
- The **lope** is an easy, rhythmical three-beat gait. Horses moving to the left should lope on the left lead. Horses moving to the right should lope on the right lead. Horses traveling at a four-beat gait are not considered to be performing at a proper lope. The horse should lope with a natural stride and appear relaxed and smooth. It should be ridden at a speed that is a natural way of going. The head should be carried at an angle which is natural and suitable to the horse's conformation at all gaits.

There will be an order of priority for evaluating western gaits. This hierarchy of consideration must be adhered to by judges and will be a great aid to exhibitors for how their horses should be presented. Following are the requirements in order of importance:

- **Correctness:** Concerning correctness, which is the most important element of the hierarchy, judges must assess if the exhibitor has performed each gait correctly as defined during all or the majority of all of the class in order to have a correct or positive evaluation. For western gaits, this includes a four-beat walk, two-beat jog and three-beat lope. The distinctness of the designated cadence for the gait being performed is essential.
- **Quality:** Concerning quality, which is the second most important element in the hierarchy, and can only be considered positively if the gait performance has complied with the first element of correctness. When evaluating the pleasing characteristics of a gait, among many considerations, judges must consider overall gracefulness, relaxed expression, topline, softness of movement, consistency and length of stride of the designated gait.
- **Degree of Difficulty:** Concerning degree of difficulty, this is the least important and last element of the hierarchy. This element must only be considered if the requirement for correctness has been met and combination of correctness and quality allow the performance to be considered for placement. Difficulty is greatly influenced by exhibiting a pleasure horse at a pace and speed that allows for correctness and best quality of a gait for that individual. A performance of a walk that is ground covering and free flowing has a high degree of difficulty. A jog or lope that is performed with a slow rhythm without sacrificing correctness or quality has a high degree of difficulty. Slowness that sacrifices correctness or negatively impacts quality shall be considered incorrect and a poor performance at best.

## WALK-TROT WESTERN PLEASURE

1. Exhibitors will perform the walk and the jog. Exhibitors may be asked to show a moderate extension of the jog at the judge's discretion. Horses are shown at a walk and jog on a reasonably loose rein or light contact without undue restraint. Horses must work both ways of the ring at both gaits to demonstrate their ability. It is up to the judge's discretion to ask the riders to back.
2. This class is for beginner riders that are only allowed to compete in other Walk-Trot classes, Halter, and Showmanship.
3. Horses may be ridden in a snaffle or curb bit regardless of age. Riders may ride two handed in a snaffle bit or one handed in a curb bit.
4. See the Western Pleasure class for specifics on class ideals and faults.

## WESTERN PLEASURE

1. This class will be judged on the performance, condition, and conformation of the horse. Horses must work both ways of the ring at a walk, jog, and lope. It is up to the judge's discretion to ask for any extension of the gaits and to back. Horses should be able to do the following:
  - Have a free-flowing, ground covering stride of reasonable length in keeping with his conformation
  - Have a head and neck carriage that is natural and level with the poll at or slightly above the level of the withers; back easily and stand quietly; reverse to the inside away from the rail; change to lope from the flat-footed walk or jog, at the judge's discretion.

## 2. Faults

- Excessive speed (any gait)
- Being on the wrong lead
- Breaking gait (including not walking when called for)
- Excessive slowness in any gait, loss of forward momentum (resulting in an animated and/or artificial gait at the jog or lope)
- Failure to take the appropriate gait when called for (during transitions, excessive delay will be penalized)
- Touching horse or saddle with free hand
- Head carried too high
- Head carried too low (poll below the withers)
- Overflexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
- Excessive nosing out
- Opening mouth excessively
- If reins are draped to the point that light contact is not maintained
- Overly canted at the lope (when the outside hind foot is farther to the inside of the arena than the inside front foot)

## **WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP**

The Western Horsemanship class is designed to evaluate the rider's ability to execute in concert with his/her horse a set of maneuvers, prescribed by the judge, with precision and smoothness while exhibiting poise and confidence and maintaining a balanced, functional, and fundamentally correct body position. The ideal horsemanship pattern is extremely precise with the rider and horse working in complete unison, executing each maneuver with subtle aids and cues. The horse's head and neck should be carried in a relaxed, natural position, with the poll level with or slightly above the withers. The head should not be carried behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance.

1. It is mandatory that the judge post any pattern(s) to be worked at least 1 hour prior to the commencement of the class; however, if the judge requires additional work of exhibitors for consideration of final placing, the pattern may not be posted. Pattern(s) should be designed to test the rider's ability. All ties will be broken at the judge's discretion.
2. All exhibitors must enter the ring and then work individually, or each exhibitor may be worked from the gate individually. When exhibitors are worked individually from the gate, a working order is required. Exhibitors should be instructed to either leave the arena, fall into line, or fall into place on the rail after their work. The whole class, or only the finalists, must work at all three gaits at least one direction of the arena. After everyone completes the assigned pattern, the class (or a portion of the class) may return to the arena for rail work.
3. The following maneuvers are acceptable in a pattern: walk, jog, trot, extended trot, lope or extended lope in a straight line, curved line, serpentine, circle or figure 8, or combination of these gaits and maneuvers; stop; back in a straight or curved line; turn or pivot, including spins and rollbacks on the haunches and/or on the forehand; sidepass, two-track, or leg-yield; flying or simple change of lead; counter-canter; or any other maneuver or ride without stirrups.
4. A back should be asked for at some time during the class. Judges should not ask exhibitors to mount or dismount.
5. The exhibitor's overall poise, confidence, appearance, and position throughout the class as well as the physical appearance of the horse will be evaluated. Appropriate western attire must be worn. Clothes and person are to be neat and clean.
6. The exhibitor should appear natural in the seat and ride with a balanced, functional, and correct position regardless of the maneuver or gait being performed. During the rail work and pattern, the exhibitor should have strong, secure, and proper position. Exhibitors should sit and maintain an upright position with the upper body at all gaits.
7. The rider should sit in the center of the saddle and the horse's back with the legs hanging to form a straight line from the ear, through the center of the shoulder and hip, touching the back of the heel or through the ankle. The heels should be lower than the toes, with a slight bend in the knee, and the lower leg should be directly under the knee. The rider's back should be flat, relaxed, and supple. An overly stiff and/or overly arched lower back will be penalized. The shoulders should be back, level, and square. The rider's base of support should maintain secure contact with the saddle from the seat to the inner thigh. Light contact should be maintained with the saddle and horse from the knee to mid-calf. The knee should point forward and remain closed with no space between the

exhibitor's knee and the saddle. The exhibitor will be penalized for positioning the legs excessively behind or forward of the vertical position. Regardless of the type of stirrup, the feet may be placed home in the stirrup, with the boot heel touching the stirrup, or may be placed with the ball of the foot in the center of the stirrup. The rider's toes should be pointing straight ahead or slightly turned out with the ankles straight or slightly broken in. Riding with toes only in the stirrup will be penalized. Those exhibitors who can maintain the proper position throughout all maneuvers should receive more credit. When riding without stirrups, the exhibitor should maintain the same position as previously described.

8. Both hands and arms should be held in a relaxed, easy manner with the upper arm in a straight line with the body. The arm holding the reins should be bent at the elbow, forming a line from the elbow to the horse's mouth. The free hand and arm may be carried bent at the elbow in a similar position as the hand holding the reins or straight down at the rider's side. Excessive pumping of the free arm as well as excessive stiffness will be penalized. The rider's wrist is to be kept straight and relaxed, with the hand held at about 30 to 45 degrees inside the vertical. The rein hand should be carried immediately above or slightly in front of the saddle horn. The reins should be adjusted so that the rider has light contact with the horse's mouth, and at no time shall reins require more than a slight hand movement to control the horse. Excessively tight or loose reins will be penalized.
9. The rider's head should be held with the chin level and the eyes forward and may be directed slightly toward the direction of travel. Excessive turning of the head to the inside of the circle or down at the horse's head or shoulder will be penalized.
10. The exhibitor should not crowd the exhibitor next to or in front of him/her when working on the rail and should pass to the inside of the arena. When reversing on the rail, the exhibitor should always reverse to the inside of the arena.
11. Presentation of Horse
  - The horse's body condition and overall health and fitness should be assessed. The horse should appear fit and carry weight appropriate for the body size.
  - A horse that appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn, or overly tired should be penalized according to severity.
12. Tack should fit the horse properly and be neat, clean, and in good repair.
13. The exhibitor should perform the work accurately, precisely, smoothly, and with a reasonable amount of promptness. Increasing speed of the maneuvers performed increases the degree of difficulty; however, accuracy and precision should not be sacrificed for speed. Exhibitors who perform the pattern sluggishly and allow their horse to move without adequate impulsion, collection, or cadence will be penalized.
14. The horse should perform all maneuvers in the pattern willingly, briskly, and readily with minimal visible or audible cuing. Severe disobedience will not result in a disqualification, but should be severely penalized, and the exhibitor should not place above an exhibitor who completes the pattern correctly. Failure to follow the prescribed pattern, knocking over or working on the wrong side of the cones, excessive schooling or training, or willful abuse by the exhibitor is cause for disqualification.
15. The horse should track straight, freely, and at the proper cadence for the prescribed gait. Transitions should be smooth and prompt in the pattern and on the rail and should be performed when called for on the rail.
16. The horse's head and neck should be straight and in line with its body while performing straight lines and slightly arched to the inside on curved lines or circles. Circles should be round and performed at the appropriate speed, size, and location as requested in the pattern. The counter-canter should be performed smoothly with no change in cadence or stride unless specified in the pattern.
17. The stop should be straight, square, prompt, smooth, and responsive with the horse maintaining a straight body position throughout the maneuver. The back should be smooth and responsive.
18. Turns should be smooth and continuous. When performing a turn on the haunches, the horse should pivot on the inside hind leg and step across with the front legs. A rollback is a stop and 180-degree turn over the hocks with no hesitation. Backing during turns will be penalized severely.
19. The horse should step across with the front and hind legs when performing the sidepass, leg-yield, and two-track. The sidepass should be performed with the horse keeping the body straight while moving directly lateral in the specified direction. When performing a leg-yield, the horse should move forward and lateral in a diagonal direction with the horse's body arced opposite to the direction that the horse is moving. In the two-track, the horse should move forward and lateral in a diagonal direction with the horse's body held straight or bent in the direction the horse is moving.

20. A simple or flying change of lead should be executed precisely in the specified number of strides and/ or at the designated location. A simple change of lead is performed by breaking to a walk or trot for one to three strides. Flying changes should be simultaneous front and rear. All changes should be smooth and timely.
21. Position of the exhibitor and performance of the horse and rider on the rail must be considered in the final placing.

Exhibitors are to be scored from 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Patterns will be divided into 6 to 10 maneuvers, as specified by the judge, and each maneuver will be scored from plus 3 to minus 3 with 1/2-point increments acceptable that will be added or subtracted from 70. Maneuver scores should be determined independently of penalties and should reflect equal consideration of both performance of the exhibitor's pattern and the horsemanship form and effectiveness of the exhibitor to result in the following scores: -3 extremely poor, -2 very poor, -1 poor, 0 average or correct, +1 good, +2 very good, +3 excellent. Exhibitors overall horsemanship form and effectiveness should also be scored from 0 to 5 with 0 to 2 average, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent. Exhibitors should also be judged on the rail, and their pattern score and/or ranking may be adjusted as appropriate.

- Penalties. Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are to be determined independently. The following penalties will be applied for each occurrence and will be deducted from the final score:
  - » Three (3) points: Break of gait at the walk or jog up to 2 strides, over or under turn from 1/8 to 1/4 turn, tick or hit of cone.
  - » Five (5) points: Not performing the specific gait or not stopping within 10 feet (3 meters) of designated location, incorrect lead or break of gait at the lope (except when correcting an incorrect lead), break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides, loss of stirrup, bottom of boot not touching pad of stirrup at all gaits including backup, head carried too low and/or clearly behind the vertical while the horse is in motion, showing the appearance of intimidation, obviously looking down to check leads.
  - » Ten (10) points: Loss of rein; use of either hand to instill fear or praise while on pattern or during rail work; holding saddle with either hand; cueng with the end of the romal; blatant disobedience including kicking, pawing, bucking, and rearing; spurring in front of the cinch.
  - » Disqualifications (should not be placed) including failure to display correct number; abuse of horse or schooling; fall by horse or exhibitor; illegal equipment or illegal use of hands on reins; use of prohibited equipment; off pattern, including knocking over or wrong side of cone or marker, never performing designated gait or lead; over- or under-turning more than 1/4 turn.

## **WESTERN TRAIL**

1. Dressage/Western Dressage and Trail classes will be offered in alternating years. In years Trail classes are not offered at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show, exhibitors may complete and submit a Southern Regionals At-Large Performance Review for Non-State Classes form if they have competed in Western/Ranch Trail at a show they attended in the same program year, placing 1st in class of 5 or more OR 2nd in class of 8 or more.
2. This class will be judged on the performance of the horse over obstacles, with emphasis on manners, response to the rider, and quality of movement. Credit will be given to horses negotiating the obstacles with style and some degree of speed, providing correctness is not sacrificed. Horses should receive credit for showing attentiveness to the obstacles and the capability of picking their own way through the course when obstacles warrant it and willingly responding to the rider's cues on more difficult obstacles.
3. The judge has the right and duty to alter the course or remove obstacles he or she deems unsafe. If at any time a trail obstacle is deemed to be unsafe by the judge, it shall be repaired or removed from the course. If it cannot be repaired and horses have completed the course, the score for that obstacle shall be deducted from all previous works for that class.
4. Horse shall be penalized for any unnecessary delay while approaching or negotiating the obstacles. Horses with artificial appearance over obstacles should be penalized.
5. Horses must not be required to work on the rail. The course must be designed to require each horse to show the three gaits (walk, jog, and lope) somewhere between obstacles as a part of its work and quality of movement and cadence should be considered as part of the maneuver score. Gait between obstacles shall be at the discretion of the judge.
6. Open to all horses and ponies. Standard tack and attire for the Western division. Hands on reins may be changed. No tie-downs or martingales. The class will have no rail work. Horses may be asked to walk, jog (intermediate gait), and lope between obstacles. Note: Gaited horses may not be asked to perform breed-specific intermediate gait over ground poles. If a jog is indicated in the pattern, gaited horses should break to the walk over the ground poles.

7. No work-offs or finals will occur. Penalty score and/or certain obstacles will be designated as tie breakers and shall be selected by the judge prior to the beginning of the competition.

## **WESTERN DRESSAGE**

Dressage/Western Dressage and Trail classes will be offered in alternating years. In years Dressage/Western Dressage is not offered at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show, exhibitors may complete and submit a Southern Regionals At-Large Performance Review for Non-State Classes form if they have competed in Dressage at a show they attended in the same program year, receiving a test score of 60% or higher.

**PERSONAL:** All exhibitors are required to wear boots and a properly fitted ASTM/SEI-approved equestrian helmet with a fastened harness for the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. Shirts with a collar and long sleeves are required. Spurs are optional and may be of Western style, with or without blunt tines, or English Dressage style. Other optional attire includes chaps, gloves, necktie or similar tie/pin, vest, jacket, coat, or sweater.

**TACK:** See the Appointments for the Western Division for the basis of allowable Western tack. The following exceptions and/or additions are allowed in Western Dressage:

1. Western cavesson on the bridle (braided or plain) with space for two fingers between the cavesson and the horse's jawl. No metal, studs, or rigid material may be part of the cavesson. No flash, figure-8, or dropped nose bands.
2. Bits/bridles that may be used on horses of any age:
  - Snaffle bit (as defined in Western Appointments).
  - Hackamore (Bosal, as defined in Western Appointments).
  - Bitless bridle. Must be Western style made of leather or leather-like material.
3. Breastplate and/or crupper.
4. One whip no longer than 47.2 inches (120cm) including lash.
5. Standard stock saddle is customary, but a working saddle, Aussie, and Western side saddle are also acceptable. A horn is optional, but Western style fenders are required. Padding on the saddle's seat and tapaderos are permitted.
6. Polo-style leg wraps close to horse's color. No other kind of boots or wraps are allowed.
7. Reins:
  - With snaffle bit: Loop/connected reins, split reins, buckled reins, mecate reins, or romal reins without a popper; two hands must be used with any of these combinations.
  - With bosal: Horsehair, rope reins and mecate reins; two hands must be used. The mecate can be tied to the saddle horn or held by the rider.
  - With curb: Romal reins or split reins. When using a curb with romal reins, only one hand is allowed; when using split reins, one or two hands are allowed.
8. Hand position on reins:
  - Romal reins: The romal is held in one hand with no fingers between the individual reins. The end of the romal may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep the romal from swinging and to adjust the position of the rein. The reins must be held so there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
  - Split reins: When split reins are held in one or two hands, the rider may not switch back and forth during a test. When the split reins are held in one hand, there are two ways that the rider may use them:
    - » With one finger between the split reins; the ends of the reins fall on the side of the reining hand.
    - » Without a finger between the reins; the hand must be around the reins. The ends of the split reins may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep them from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins. The reins must be held so there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
  - At the end of the Free Walk or Free Jog, riders using split reins held in one hand may use the free or offhand to pull the reins back to the desired length. Riders using romal reins may use the hand using the romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand.

In addition to what is described in Appointments for the Western Division, the following are not allowed in Western Dressage:

1. Full cheeks, half cheeks, kimberwicks, roping bits with both reins attached to a single ring, or any type of rein or attachment that increases the effective length of the bit's shank or creates additional leverage.

2. Round, rolled, braided, or rawhide curb straps.
3. Martingales, bit guards, any kind of gadgets (such as bearing, side, running, balancing reins, nasal strips, tongue tied down, etc.), any kind of boots (including “easy-boots,” splint/hock/bell boots, etc.), tail bandages, any form of blinkers, ear muffs or plugs, and nose covers.

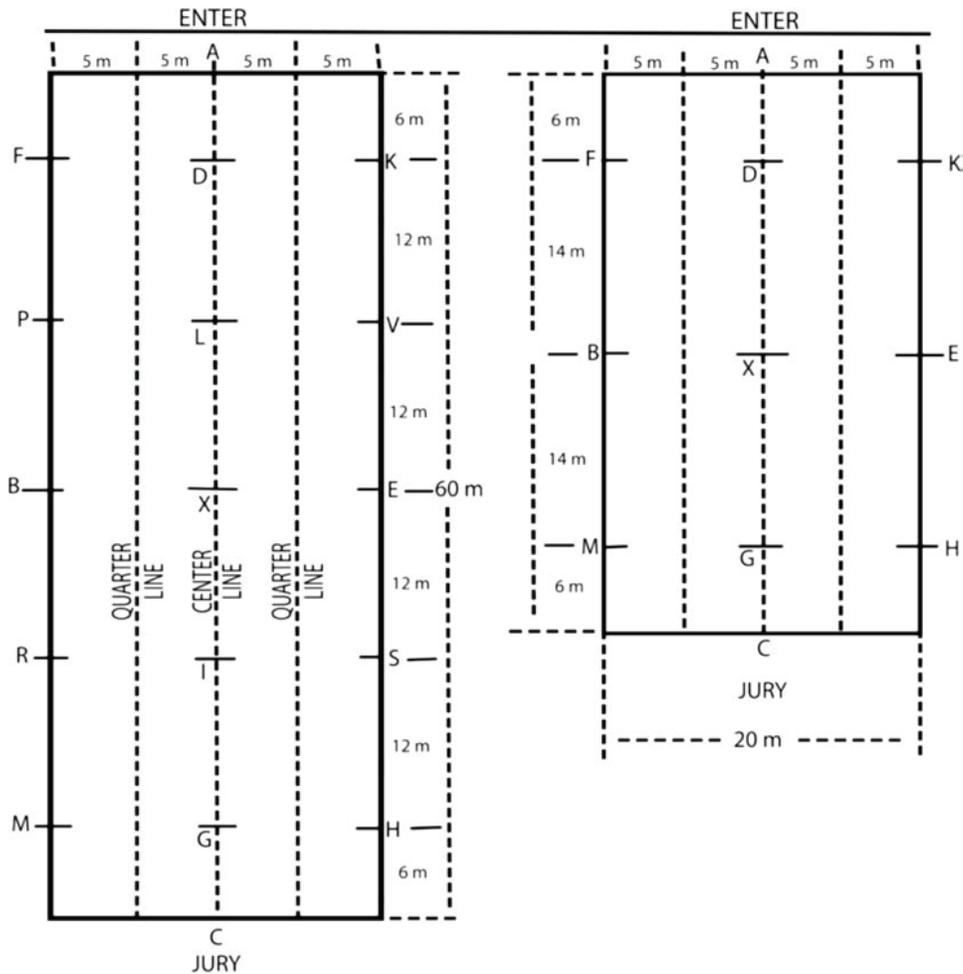
The above restrictions apply to warm-up and other training areas; however, running martingales (only with snaffle rein or plain snaffle bridle), boots, and bandages (without magnets) are permitted.

## **EXECUTION AND JUDGING OF TESTS**

Western Dressage integrates the historically validated principles of Dressage with the best of western stock horse tradition for the purpose of enjoying a safe, pleasurable, versatile, and useful working horse. The hallmarks of the Western Dressage horse are usefulness, rideability, willingness, safety, pure gaits, lightness, calmness, and steadiness. A Western Dressage rider should use clear, effective, subtle aids coupled with a confident seat and light, responsive hands in communication with the horse.

1. A Western Dressage partnership should exhibit impulsion originating from deeply engaged hindquarters transmitted without resistance through a supple topline to a light, soft contact with the rider’s hand(s). The horse should move freely forward via a willingness to work off the hindquarters, which enables the western horse to be a useful working partner.
2. The gaited horse will perform a saddle gait in place of the jog. The saddle gait selected should be the gait in which the gaited horse is balanced and athletically comfortable performing. The saddle gait is a four- beat lateral or diagonal gait, timely and evenly performed. The tempo, rhythm, and foot falls of the gait they choose to show must not change throughout the test. The true four-beat gait the horse performs should be able to be ridden in a working, lengthened, free, and collected manner as called for in the Western Dressage test.
3. See the USEF rulebook ([www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org)) for further explanations of the general principles of Western Dressage competition and the correct gaits (included for gaited horses) and movements.
4. The Dressage test used will be selected annually.
5. Arena size may be either 20m x 40m or 20m x 60m.
6. Approximately 6 to 8 minutes will be allowed for each test. The specific time limit will be based on the test selected. Show management reserves the right to adjust individual ride times under extenuating circumstances.
7. A competitor who does not enter the arena within 45 seconds after the entry bell or whistle is sounded for his or her ride shall be eliminated.
8. Tests may be called during the competition. If tests are announced, it is the responsibility of the competitor to arrange for a person to announce the test. Lateness and errors in announcing the ride will not relieve the rider from error penalties. Announcing the test is limited to reading the movement as it is written once only. However, the repetition of reading of a movement is acceptable if there is reason to doubt that the rider heard the original call.
9. Voice: The quiet use of the voice or clicking the tongue once or repeatedly is permitted. Touch: Petting the horse is allowed during the test as a gentle reward.
10. When a competitor makes an “error of the course” (takes the wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.), the judge warns him or her by sounding the bell or whistle. The judge shows him or her, if necessary, the point at which he or she must take up the test again and the next movement to be executed then leaves him or her to continue by himself or herself.
11. The score for each movement should first establish the fact of whether the movement is performed insufficiently (4 or below) or sufficiently (5 or above). The scoring scale is as follows: 10 - Excellent, 9 - Very Good, 8 - Good, 7 - Fairly Good, 6 - Satisfactory, 5 - Marginal, 4 - Insufficient, 3 - Fairly Bad, 2 - Bad, 1 - Very Bad, and 0 - Not performed.
12. In the case of a fall of horse and/or rider, the competitor will be eliminated.
13. If during the test (between the time of entry and the time of exit at A) the horse leaves the arena (all four feet outside the fence or line marking the arena perimeter), the competitor is eliminated.

14. Resistance of the horse that prevents continuation of the test for longer than 20 seconds results in elimination.
15. In case of ties, the competitor with the highest marks received under Collective Marks shall be declared the winner. When the scores for Collective Marks tie, the judge may be required to decide on the winner after review of both score sheets.
16. In most cases, it is acceptable for a competitor to enter and work in the perimeter area surrounding the arena (not within the arena itself) immediately before his or her ride and after the final salute of the previous competitor.



## RANCH DIVISION

### PERSONAL

1. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parents or guardian, or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance.
2. Entries must be shown with a stock saddle. Silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. Riders shall wear tucked-in, long-sleeved Western shirt and cowboy boots. Boots may be either pull-on or lace-up style. Tennis shoe-style/type boots are not allowed. Chaps, rope, and spurs are optional.
3. For more specifics on tack and equipment requirements, see the Western and Ranch Division Tack, Attire, and Bits section.

### GAITS

In all gaits, movement of the ranch horse should simulate a horse needing to cover long distances, softly and quietly, like that of a working ranch horse. The following terminology shall apply:

- The **back up** displays balanced and smooth flowing movements. The horse should back straight with self-carriage without gapping the mouth with light contact and without hesitation.
- The **walk** is a natural, flat-footed, four-beat gait. The gait is rhythmic and ground-covering. As in all gaits, the horse should display a level, or slightly above level topline with a bright, attentive expression.
- The **extended walk** is an obvious lengthening of stride that will naturally increase the pace. The horse should move in a natural manner (not a running walk) as if it were moving across an open pasture.
- The **trot** is a natural two-beat gait demonstrating more forward motion than the western jog.
- The **extended trot** is an obvious lengthening of the stride with a definite increase in pace. The horse should be moving in a manner as if it were covering a large area on a ranch with an above level topline.
- The **lope** is a three-beat gait. The lope should be relaxed and smooth with a natural, forward moving stride.
- The **extended lope** is not a run or a race but should be an obvious lengthening of the stride, demonstrating a forward, working speed. The horse should display an above level topline with a bright, attentive expression.

### RANCH RIDING

1. Ranch Riding serves to measure the ability of the horse to be functional and a pleasure to ride at a working speed while being used as a means of conveyance from one western stock horse task to another. This horse should be well-broke, relaxed, quiet, soft, and cadenced at all gaits. The horse should be responsive to the rider, yield to contact, and make all required transitions smoothly, timely and correctly. The horse should perform with reasonable speed and be obedient, well-mannered, free, and easy moving.
2. Class consists of pattern work which is ridden individually. For each maneuver, the horse is judged on quality of gaits, response to the rider, manners, and disposition. One of the American Quarter Horse Association approved patterns will be selected. Patterns including cattle will not be used at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show but may be used at the Southern Regional Horse Championships.
3. A horse will be given credit for traveling with his head held in a normal position, ears alert, and moving at a natural speed for the gait requested. The horse should be ridden on a relatively loose rein with light contact and without requiring undue restraint. Excessively long floppy reins will not be given extra credit.
4. Tack and Equipment: Ranch work equipment and attire are recommended, but show equipment and attire will not be penalized. Roping reins or reins with romal are permitted.
5. Use of Hands: Junior horses that are shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit may be ridden with one or two hands on the reins. When exhibiting in a snaffle bit or hackamore, an exhibitor may switch between two hands and one hand on the reins at any time. Junior horses shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit and senior horses, which must be shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit, must be ridden with one hand when using split reins. Only the index finger (one finger) permitted between the split reins is allowed. Please see "Western and Ranch Division Bits and Reins" pertaining to proper romal usage.

## SUGGESTED SCORING

1. Each horse will work individually, performing both required and optional maneuvers, and be scored on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 denoting an average performance.
2. One (1) point penalties: Too slow/per gait; over-bridled; out of frame; break of gait at walk or jog for 2 strides or less.
3. Three (3) point penalties: Break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides; break of gait at lope; wrong lead or out of lead; draped reins; out of lead or cross-cantering more than two strides when changing leads trotting more than three strides when making a simple lead change; severe disturbance of any obstacle.
4. Five (5) point penalties: Blatant disobedience (kick, bite, buck, rear, etc.) for each refusal; placed below horses performing all maneuvers; eliminates maneuver; incomplete maneuver.
5. Zero (0) score: Illegal equipment including hoof black, braided, or banded manes, or tail extensions; willful abuse; major disobedience or schooling.

## RANCH GROUND HANDLING

1. This class tests the handler's ability to communicate with the horse from the ground by judging a series of maneuvers that require the horse to yield to pressure—forward, backward, and laterally. Maneuvers are selected to be realistic in their application to everyday training.
2. Exhibitor movements should be workmanlike and efficient, and the horse should be obedient and cooperative. Evaluating safe and effective ground handling will take priority to the quality of attire or tack.
3. Each exhibitor will perform a pattern that will consist of no less than seven (7) of the maneuvers listed below. Exhibitors may be asked to work from both the left and right side of the horse during any of the listed maneuvers (switching hands on the lead is permitted).
  - Square horse for inspection; judge will only walk in front of the horse.
  - Lead the horse at a walk, jog/trot (or favorite gait for gaited horses only), or back in a straight or curved\* line, or a combination of straight and curved\* lines. (\*Curve = any non-straight line including, but not limited to any change of direction from gradual turns to distinct turns, circles or portions of circles, or multiple curves to create a shape.)
  - Stop.
  - Answer questions from the judge.
  - Pivots, moving the forehand up to 270 degrees.
  - Move the hindquarters, up to 270 degrees (turn on forehand).
  - Step away from the horse to the end of the lead while horse remains still.
  - Lower the horse's head (pulling down on the lead or pressure on the poll).
  - Demonstrate a sidepass.
  - Back the horse while handler remains stationary.
  - Send horse in a circle (either direction), around a marker, or over a pole.
4. Poles, barrels, and cones may be used as markers to define maneuver locations and/or parameters. However, the pattern should not take on the appearance of an "In-hand Trail" class. Hitting/touching/ moving these objects will not be scored as penalties, but taken into account when scoring the handler's abilities.
5. Exhibitors may be asked to work from both the left and right side of the horse during any of the listed maneuvers (switching hands on the lead is permitted). Exhibitors may touch the horse to initiate any lateral movement and when asked to lower the horse's head. The judge will recognize added degree of difficulty of not touching the horse and this will be reflected in the maneuver score.
6. Scoring will be on the basis of 0 to 100 with 70 denoting an average performance. Judges will assess each maneuver on a scale from 1 1/2 to +1 1/2 with 1/2 point increments in between. In addition to the maneuver score, exhibitors can incur penalty points as listed below.

## 7. Penalties

- One-half (1/2) point
  - » Break of gait (walk or trot) up to 1 full stride.
- One (1) point
  - » Touching horse other than when allowed. It is acceptable to touch the horse to sidepass, move the hindquarters, and lower the head.
- Two (2) points
  - » Freeze up: complete loss of forward, backward, or lateral movement within a maneuver.
  - » Break of gait (walk or trot) for more than 1 full stride.
  - » Use of hand on halter in any manner.
  - » Touching horse with lead (first offense).
  - » Incorrect or incomplete answer to the judge's question.
  - » Artificial or overdone showing.
- Five (5) points
  - » Inappropriate body condition score: Clearly below a 4 or clearly above a 7.
  - » Balking, continued spooking, kicking, biting, rearing, striking.
  - » Failure to complete a maneuver.
  - » Leaving out a maneuver.
  - » Touching horse with end of lead (second offense).
- Zero (0) score
  - » Consistent lameness.
  - » Illegal attire.
  - » Illegal tack.
  - » Abuse.

8. Horses are to be shown in a good working halter: rope, braided, nylon, or plain leather. Horses may not be shown with a lip cord or safety lead; however, a chain may be used under the chin or over the nose. It is recommended but not required for exhibitors to remove their spurs.

### **WALK-TROT WORKING WESTERN RAIL**

1. Exhibitors will perform the walk and jog. Exhibitors may be asked to show the extended walk and/or extended jog at the judge's discretion. The Walk-Trot Working Western Rail class will be judged on the performance, condition, and conformation of the horse at the discretion of the judge. Horses are shown at a walk and jog on a reasonably loose rein or light contact without undue restraint. Horses must work both ways of the ring at both gaits to demonstrate their ability. It is up to the judge's discretion to ask the riders to back.
2. This class is for beginner riders that are only allowed to compete in other Walk-Trot classes, Halter, and Showmanship.
3. Horses may be ridden in a snaffle or curb bit regardless of age. Riders may ride two handed in a snaffle bit or one handed in a curb bit.
4. See the Working Western Rail class for specifics on class ideals and faults.

### **WORKING WESTERN RAIL**

1. The Working Western Rail class measures the ability of the horse to be a pleasure to ride and should reflect the versatility, attitude, and movement of a working horse. The horse should be well-broke, relaxed, quiet, soft and cadenced at all gaits. The movement of the working western rail horse should simulate a horse needing to cover long distances, softly and quietly. The overall manners and responsiveness of the horse and the horse's quality of movement are the primary considerations. Maximum credit should be given to the horse that has a natural flowing stride and consistent, ground covering gaits. Transitions should be performed when requested, with smoothness and responsiveness. The ideal working western rail horse should have a natural head carriage at each gait. The horse should be ridden on a relatively loose rein with light contact and without requiring undue restraint while being

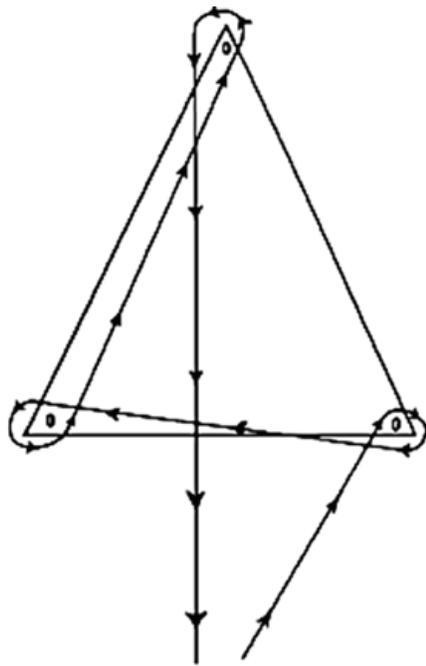
responsive to the rider and making timely transitions in a smooth and correct manner. The horse should be soft in the bridle, yield to contact and shall not be shown on a full drape of rein. Riders are encouraged to use adequate space given the extension of gaits required. This class should show the horse's ability to work at a forward, working pace while under control by the rider. The horse shall be balanced and appear willing and a pleasure to ride in a group situation.

2. All exhibitors will work as a group. Individuals working off the rail will not be penalized and passing is permissible. Horses must work both ways of the ring at the walk, trot and lope. Horses must work at least one way of the ring at the extended trot and extended lope. At the option of the judge, horses may be asked to extend their stride at the walk.
3. The overall cadence and performance of the gaits should be as those described in Ranch Division gaits with an emphasis on a forward, free-flowing, and ground-covering movement. At the extended trot and lope, the exhibitor may post or stand in the stirrups. Touching or holding the saddle horn during any extended gait is acceptable. Horses are to be reversed to the inside (away from the rail). They may be required to reverse at the walk or trot at the discretion of the judge but shall not be asked to reverse at the lope. Horses are required to back easily and stand quietly. Horses may be brought to the center or backed on the rail. The rider shall not be required to dismount except in the event the judge wishes to check equipment.
4. Equipment with silver should not count over a good working outfit. Excessive silver on bridles and saddles is discouraged. It is suggested competitors use a breast collar and a rear cinch.
5. When exhibiting in a snaffle bit or hackamore, an exhibitor may switch between two hands and one hand on the reins at any time. Use of two hands (except junior horses shown in a snaffle bit/hackamore), more than one finger between split reins or any fingers between romal reins (except in the two-rein) shall be cause for disqualification.
6. Faults according to severity:
  - Too slow (any gait)
  - Excessive speed (any gait)
  - Over-bridled (nose behind the vertical)
  - Head carried too low such that the poll is below the withers
  - Out of frame
  - Head carried too high
  - Break of gait
  - Wrong lead or out of lead
  - Failure to take the appropriate gait when called
  - Opening mouth excessively
  - Draped reins
  - Use of spurs forward of the cinch
  - Canted at the lope
  - Blatant disobedience (kick, bite, buck, rear, etc.)
7. Faults which will be cause for disqualification: Head carried too low and/or clearly behind the vertical excessively and consistently while the horse is in motion, or otherwise showing the appearance of intimidation.

## **SPEED DIVISION**

### **PERSONAL**

1. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parents or guardian, or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance.
2. Western saddles will be used. No exhibitor may be tied, bucked, or fastened into the saddle in any manner or by any means during competition. Clothing should be clean and neat. Shirts with a collar and long sleeves are required along with western boots.
3. For more specifics on tack and equipment requirements, see the Speed Division Tack, Attire, and Bits section.



**Finish & Start**  
Rider may enter from right or left side.

### BARREL RACE

1. Speed Events General Rules apply.
2. The course must be set to fit the arena. The course should be set so that a horse may have ample room to turn and stop. (All barrels are recommended to be at least 21 feet from the fence if possible.)
3. Knocking over a barrel shall carry a 5-second penalty. Failure to follow the course shall cause disqualification. A contestant may touch the barrel with his or her hands in Barrel Racing.
4. A superintendent, ring steward, or some other official will be designated to rule pattern disqualifications in the absence of the official show judge.

### ARENA RACE

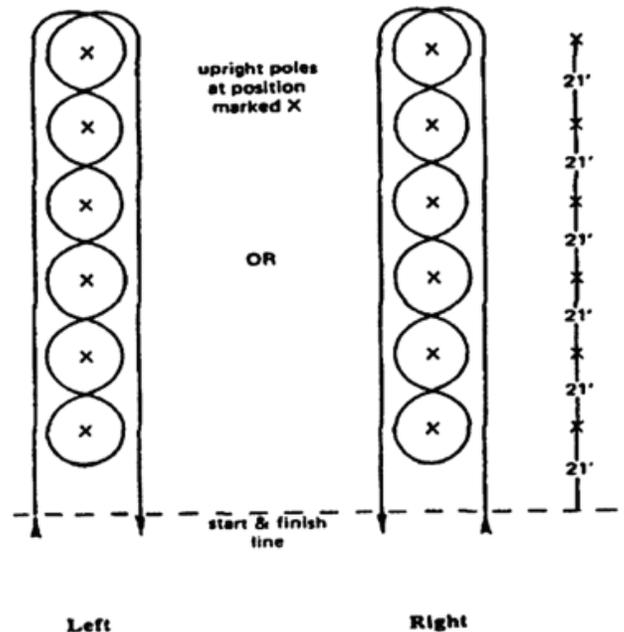
One barrel is placed at the opposite end of the arena from the start line at a minimum of 25 feet from the rail. Each exhibitor must ride to the barrel turning left or right and return to start/finish line. A "No time" will result if the timer barrier is prematurely broken, if the pattern is not completed, or if the barrel is knocked over.

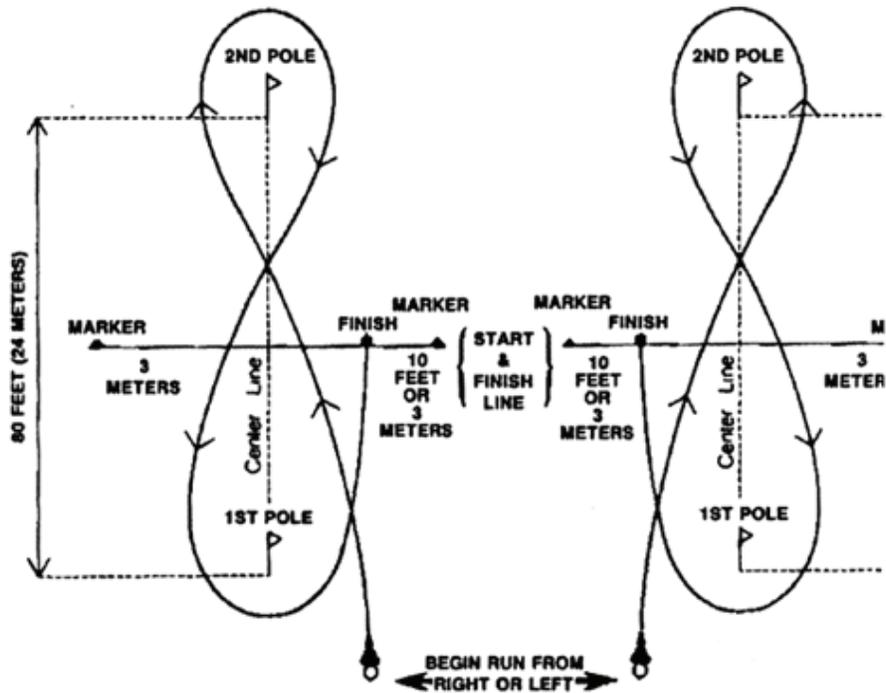
### POLE BENDING

The pattern is run around six poles. The poles are placed in a straight line 21 feet apart, going away from the starting line.

1. The first pole is to be 21 feet from the starting line.
2. Contestants may start on either side of the line of poles. They will cross the starting line, move in an approximately straight line to pole 6 (the farthest pole), make an 80-degree turn around pole 6, pass between pole 6 and pole 5, bend through the poles to pole 1, circle pole 1, bend through the poles to pole 6, make a 180-degree turn around pole 6, and cross the starting line by moving along the poles on the side opposite that on which they first approached pole 6.
3. A 5-second penalty will be assessed for each pole knocked down.
4. A "No time" will result if the timer barrier is prematurely broken or if the pattern is not completed.

### Pole Bending Pattern





## STAKE RACE

1. The rider is allowed a running start and may begin his/her run from either the left or right side of the first pole.
2. The contestant is allowed a running start. Timing shall begin as soon as the horse's nose reaches the starting line and will be stopped when the horse's nose passes over the finish line.
3. Start by crossing midline between the upright markers, run pattern as shown in diagram, and finish by again crossing center line. The contestant starts between the two center markers and runs a pattern around the two end poles. The first run may be either left or right; however, the second turn must be opposite of the first.
4. This is a timed event. If an upright marker is knocked down, there is no time.
5. Upright markers are set 40 feet on either side of the center line. Two upright markers will be placed on the starting line 20 feet apart (10 feet on each side of the midline).
6. If an electric timer is used, it is suggested that rubber cones, short enough not to interfere with the timer, be used. Contestants must cross start and finish lines between the markers. Failure to do so shall result in disqualification.
7. All contestants are eligible to enter in Stake Race.

# HUNT SEAT DIVISION

## PERSONAL

1. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parents or guardian, or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance.
2. Clothing must be neat, clean, and appropriate for Hunter classes. Riders should wear coats of any tweed or melton (conservative wash jackets in season), britches of traditional shades of buff, gray, rust, beige, or canary (jodhpur included), and high English boots or jodhpur boots. Dark blue, brown, or black approved ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with fastened chin harness and stock, tie, or choker are required. Spurs of the unroweled type, crops, or bats are optional. Hair must be neat and contained (as in a net or braid).

## GAITS

- The **back up** displays balanced and smooth flowing movements. The horse should back straight with self-carriage without gapping the mouth with light contact and without hesitation.
- The **walk** is a four-beat gait and the horse should have a balanced and comfortable topline, relaxed demeanor and appear bright and attentive. The horse should maintain rhythm, flow and cadence and travel straight with light contact from the reins. He reaches from the horse shoulder and tracks up from behind with the horse reaching legs staying close to the ground. The horse's feet enter the ground softly and maintain the same pace coming out of the ground as he has going into it.
- The **trot** is a two-beat gait that should seem effortless and efficient. The horse is balanced, has a level top line and has an even rhythm and cadence. He has excellent manners and great expression appearing relaxed and happy, soft in the horse poll, jaw and mouth and is shown on light contact.
- The **extended trot** should have the horse who when asked to extend has an obvious lengthening in the horse stride with a slight increase in the horse pace making him more versatile. The horse is still smooth but appears to have more length with less effort being exerted.
- The **canter** is a three-beat gait with a strong, deep, forward stride behind and an equally forward, flat-kneed reach with the horse front legs. He appears effortless and totally in control of the horse motion with great self-carriage. He creates energy yet stays soft and responsive to the horse rider. The horse weight is distributed properly onto the horse hindquarters, and he moves with long, slow strides. The horse has a great degree of suspension, impulsion and elasticity to the horse movement. He has great expression with ears forward and is consistent, relaxed and confident with light bit contact.
- The **hand gallop** should be a definite lengthening of stride with noticeable difference in speed. Horses should be under control at all times and be able to pull-up (not a sliding stop). If asked to pull-up, after the halt, riders must relax the reins and the horse must stand quietly.

## WALK-TROT HUNTER UNDER SADDLE

1. Exhibitors will perform the walk and the posting trot. Hunters should move with long, low strides reaching forward with ease and smoothness, be able to lengthen stride and cover ground with relaxed, free-flowing movement while exhibiting correct gaits of the proper cadence. Horses must work both ways of the ring at both gaits to demonstrate their ability. It is up to the judge's discretion to ask the riders to back.
2. This class is for beginner riders that are only allowed to compete in other Walk-Trot classes, Halter, and Showmanship.
3. See the Hunter Under Saddle class for ideals and faults.

## HUNTER UNDER SADDLE

The purpose of the Hunter Under Saddle horse is to present or exhibit a horse with a bright, alert expression, whose gaits show potential of being a Working Hunter. Therefore, its gait must be free flowing, ground covering, and athletic. Hunters under saddle should be suitable to purpose. Hunters should move with long, low strides reaching forward with ease and smoothness, be able to lengthen stride and cover ground with relaxed, free-flowing movement while exhibiting correct gaits of the proper cadence. The quality of the movement and the consistency of the gaits are a major consideration. Horses should be obedient, have a bright expression with alert ears, and respond willingly to the rider with light leg and hand contact. Horses should be responsive and smooth in transition. When asked to extend the trot or hand gallop, they should move out with the same flowing motion. The poll should be level with or slightly above the withers to allow proper impulsion behind. The head position should be slightly in front of or on the vertical.

This class will be judged on performance, condition, and conformation. Maximum credit will be given to the flowing, balanced, willing horse.

1. Horses to be judged on the following:
  - Shown under saddle, not to jump.
  - Shown at a walk, trot, and canter both ways of the ring. Horses should back easily and stand quietly.
  - Reversed to the inside away from the rail.
2. Horses may be asked to change to canter from the flat-footed walk or trot, at the judge's discretion.
3. Faults to be scored according to severity:
  - Quick, short, or vertical strides
  - Being on the wrong lead
  - Breaking gait
  - Excessive speed at any gait
  - Excessive slowness at any gait; loss of forward momentum
  - Failure to take the appropriate gait when called for
  - Head carried too high
  - Head carried too low (such that poll is below the withers)
  - Overflexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
  - Excessive nosing out
  - Failure to maintain light contact with horse's mouth
  - Stumbling
  - Horse appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn, or overly tired
  - Consistently showing too far off the rail
4. At the option of the judge, all or only the top 12 horses may be required to hand gallop, one or both ways of the ring. Never more than 12 horses will hand gallop at one time. At the hand gallop, the judge may ask the group to halt and stand quietly on a free (loosened) rein.

#### **HUNT SEAT EQUITATION ON THE FLAT**

1. Hunt Seat Equitation on the Flat is an evaluation based on the ability of a rider to perform various maneuvers in harmony with the horse. The communication between horse and rider should be subtle.
2. Riders will be required to work on the rail. Riders shall enter the ring at a walk in a counterclockwise direction. The riders will proceed at least once around the ring at each gait (walk, trot, and canter) and on command, reverse, and repeat. The riders may be requested to gallop in safe groups and/or perform additional tests. The reverse may be executed by turning either toward or away from the rail.
3. It is mandatory that the judge post the pattern at least 1 hour before the beginning of the class. The pattern should be designed so the majority of exhibitors can perform it in a reasonable amount of time (fewer than 60 seconds). All patterns must include a trot and a canter. Horses' gaits are to be ridden with the same cadence and speed you would see in Hunter Under Saddle. All ties will be broken at the discretion of the judge. Failure to complete the pattern will not be a disqualification but will be scored accordingly. Riders will not be required to jump.
4. Exhibitors may be worked individually from the gate or they may all enter at once, but a working order must be drawn, regardless. The entire class, or only the finalists, must work at all three gaits at least one direction of the arena. Rail work can be used to break ties and possibly adjust placings. Individual works may be composed of any of the following maneuvers:
  - Walk
  - Sitting trot
  - Extended trot
  - Posting trot
  - Canter
  - Circles

- Figure eight
- Halt
- Back
- Sidepass
- Address reins
- Demonstrate change of diagonal
- Serpentine (trot or canter)
- Turn on haunches or forehand: A turn on forehand to the right is accomplished by moving haunches to the left. A forehand turn to the left is accomplished by moving the haunches to the right.
- Leg yield: When performing a leg yield, the horse should move forward and lateral in a diagonal direction with the horse's body straight with a slight flexion of the head in the opposite direction of lateral movement. When a horse yields to the right, the head is slightly (just to see the eye of the horse) to the left. When a horse yields to the left, the head is slightly flexed to the right.
- Flying or simple change of lead

#### 5. Basic Position

- To mount, take up the reins in left hand and place hand on withers. Grasp stirrup leather with right hand and insert left foot in stirrup and mount. To dismount, rider may either step down or slide down. The size of the rider must be taken into consideration.
- Hands should be over and in front of the horse's withers, knuckles 30 degrees inside the vertical, hands slightly apart, and making a straight line from horse's mouth to rider's elbow. The method of holding reins is optional, and the bight of reins may fall on either side. However, all reins must be picked up at the same time.
- The rider should maintain light contact with the horse's mouth at all times except when standing still.
- The eyes should be up and shoulders back. Toes should be at an angle best suited to rider's conformation. Heels should be down with the calf of the leg in contact with the horse. The iron should be on the ball of the foot and must not be tied to the girth.
  - » Position in Motion
    - » Walk: Should be a four-beat gait with the rider in a vertical position with a following hand.
    - » Posting trot: Figure eight at a trot, demonstrating a change of diagonals.

6. At left diagonal, the rider should be sitting in the saddle when the left front leg is on the ground. At right diagonal, the rider should be sitting in the saddle when the right front leg is on the ground. When circling clockwise at a trot, the rider should be on left diagonal. When circling counter-clockwise, the rider should be on right diagonal. The rider should close his or her hip angle to allow the torso to follow the horizontal motion of the horse. The upper body should be inclined about 20 degrees in front of the vertical.

- Sitting trot and canter: At the sitting trot the upper body is only slightly in front of the vertical. At the canter, the body should be positioned slightly more in front of the vertical. As the stride is shortened, the body should be in a slightly more erect position.
- Two-point position: The pelvis should be forward but relaxed, lifting the rider's weight off the horse's back and transferring the weight through the rider's legs. In this position, the two points of contact between horse and rider are the rider's legs. Hands should be forward and up the neck, not resting on the neck.
- Hand gallop: A three-beat, lengthened canter ridden in a two-point position. The legs are on the horse's sides while the seat is held out of the saddle. When at the hand gallop, the rider's angulation will vary somewhat as the horse's stride is shortened and lengthened. A good standard at a normal hand gallop should be about 30 degrees in front of the vertical.

### SUGGESTED SCORING

- Exhibitors are to be scored from 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Patterns will be divided into 6 to 10 maneuvers, as specified by the judge, and each maneuver will be scored from plus 3 to minus 3 with 1/2-point increments acceptable that will be added or subtracted from 70. Maneuver scores should be determined independent of penalties and should reflect equal consideration of both the performance of the exhibitor's pattern and the horsemanship form and effectiveness of the exhibitor to result in the following scores: -3 extremely poor, -2 very poor, -1 poor, 0 average or correct, +1 good, +2 very good, +3 excellent.

Exhibitors' overall horsemanship form and effectiveness should also be scored from 0 to 5 with 0 to 2 average, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent. Exhibitors should also be judged on the rail, and their pattern score and/or ranking may be adjusted as appropriate.

- Penalties. Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are to be determined independently. The following penalties will be applied for each occurrence and will be deducted from the final score:
  - » 3 points: Break of gait at the walk or trot up to 2 strides, over or under turn from 1/8 to 1/4 turn, tick or hit of the cone, missing a diagonal up to 2 strides in the pattern or on the rail.
  - » 5 points: Not performing the specific gait or not stopping within 10 feet (3 meters) of the designated location, incorrect lead or break of the gait at the canter (except when correcting an incorrect lead), complete loss of contact between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth, break of the gait at the walk or trot for more than 2 strides, loss of iron, head carried too low and/or clearly behind the vertical while the horse is in motion, showing the appearance of intimidation, obviously looking down to check leads or diagonals, missing a diagonal for more than 2 strides in the pattern or on the rail.
  - » 10 points: Loss of the rein, use of either hand to instill fear or praise while on pattern or during rail work, holding the saddle with either hand, spurring or using the crop in front of girth, blatant disobedience including kicking, pawing, bucking, and rearing.
  - » Disqualifications (should not be placed): Failure by the exhibitor to wear correct number in a visible manner; willful abuse of the horse or schooling; fall by the horse or exhibitor; illegal use of hands on the reins; use of prohibited equipment; off pattern, including knocking over or wrong side of cone or marker; never performing designated gait, lead, or diagonal; over or under turning more than 1/4 turn.

## HUNTER HACK

The purpose of this class is to give horses an opportunity to show their expertise over low fences and on the flat. The horse should move in the same style as a Working Hunter. The class will be judged on the following criteria: even hunting space, way of going, and jumping style. The class has two components: (1) fence work, which represents 70 percent of the score (scored the same as Working Hunter), and (2) rail work, which represents 30 percent of the score. Horses are shown at the rail at a walk, trot, and canter both ways of the ring with light contact. Fence height will not exceed 2.5 feet. Horses are first required to jump two fences, 2 feet 3 inches (69 cm) to 3 feet (91 cm). Show management has the option to allow a third fence. However, if the jumps are set on a line, they are recommended to be in increments of 12 feet (3.5 meters) but adjusted to no less than two strides. A ground line is recommended for each jump.

## SUGGESTED SCORING

Scoring is to be judged on manners, way of going, and style of jumping. Horses shall be credited with maintaining an even hunting pace that covers the course with free-flowing strides. Preference will be given to horses with a correct jumping style that meet fences squarely, jumping at the center of fence. Judges shall penalize unsafe jumping and bad form over the fence, whether touched or untouched, including twisting. Incorrect leads around the ends of the course or cross-cantering shall be penalized. Excessive use of the crop will also be penalized. In and outs (one or two strides) shall be taken in the correct number of strides or be penalized. Any error that endangers the horse and/or its rider, particularly refusals or knockdowns, shall be heavily penalized.

Scoring shall align with the scoring listed on pages 280 to 282 of the AQHA Rulebook. Faults during railwork are listed on pages 277 to 278. Access the rulebook at [aqha.com/aqha-rulebook](http://aqha.com/aqha-rulebook).

The following will result in elimination:

- A total of three disobediences that can include any of the following: refusal, stop, run out, or extra circle; jumping an obstacle before it is reset; bolting from the arena; off course; deliberately addressing an obstacle.

## HUNT SEAT EQUITATION OVER FENCES

(Jumps will not exceed 2 feet 6 inches.)

The purpose of this event should be to evaluate the rider's correctness and ability over the fences. This class should be judged on the precision of riding ability while executing the jumps. The rider's performance and skills over fences are being judged in this class. The rider's basic position in the saddle; position and use of hands, legs, and feet; ability to control and show the horse; and suitability of horse to rider are important, but the rider's skills and execution must be considered.

1. Each rider will perform a pattern consisting of at least six jumps.
2. Three cumulative refusals will cause elimination.
3. Maximum fence height will correspond to those listed in the Working Hunter rules.

4. The same position as Equitation on the Flat is expected.
5. The judges will score each rider on his/her individual skills and execution of the pattern.

### **SUGGESTED SCORING**

Scoring shall align with the scoring listed on pages 283 to 284 of the AQHA Rulebook. Access the rulebook at [aqha.com/aqha-rulebook](http://aqha.com/aqha-rulebook).

### **WORKING HUNTER**

1. The Working Hunter is a representative of the type of horse used in the hunt field. The horse should possess manners, jumping ability, style, pace, and quality. The Working Hunter must be able to demonstrate its ability to furnish the rider with a smooth, comfortable, and safe ride.
2. All horses must be serviceably sound. Horses must be placed on performance before consideration for soundness. Finalists will be jogged in hand past the judge for soundness in order of performance.
3. Any horse showing lameness, broken wind, or impairment of vision will be refused an award at the judge's discretion.
4. Each horse will individually negotiate a course consisting of at least eight jumps with a minimum of four obstacles. One change of direction is mandatory.
5. The course diagram must be posted 1 hour before the class is called. Judging will start when the horse enters the arena and end when the horse leaves the arena.
6. The maximum height of fences will be 2 feet 6 inches.
7. Management should provide at least one practice jump. This jump should be in a warm-up ring or area.
8. Jumps to be used in the jumping classes may be selected from the following list but will not be limited to this list:
  - Brush
  - Post and rail
  - In and out (post and rails spaced 24 to 26 feet)
  - Gate
  - Chicken coop
  - Stone wall
  - Oxer (must not be square; it is recommended that the back element be 3 to 6 inches higher)
9. When designing a hunt course, the jumps should be spaced a minimum of 48 feet apart; but all intervals must be multiples of 12 feet (for example, 48 feet and 60 feet apart from the point of landing to the point of takeoff in the next jump). The distance of takeoff or landing from the jump is usually equal to the height of the jump to 1½ times the height of the jump (for example, for a 3-foot fence, the takeoff point would be from 3 to 4½ feet from the fence).

### **SUGGESTED SCORING**

1. Scoring will be judged on manners, way of going, and style of jumping. Horses will be credited with maintaining an even hunting pace that covers the course with free-flowing strides. Preference will be given to horses with the correct jumping style that meet fences squarely, jumping at the center of fence. Judges will penalize unsafe jumping and bad form over fence, whether touched or untouched, including twisting. Incorrect leads around the ends of the course or cross-cantering will be penalized, as well as excessive use of the crop. In and outs (one or two strides) will be taken in the correct number of strides or be penalized. Any error that endangers the horse and/or its rider, particularly refusals or knockdowns, will be heavily penalized.
2. Scoring shall align with the scoring listed on pages 283 to 284 of the AQHA Rulebook. Access the rulebook at [aqha.com/aqha-rulebook](http://aqha.com/aqha-rulebook).
3. Faults
  - An even hunting pace is required for a good performance. Excessive speed, breaking gaits, wrong leads, etc., will be penalized.
  - Jumping form and style will be considered. Unsafe jumping will be penalized, regardless of whether the jump was cleared.

- Light touches are not to be considered in the jumping but may be recorded for reference in extremely close competition. Touching brush only on a brush jump is not to be scored as a touch.
- When a horse makes two faults at an obstacle, only the major fault on the top element will be scored.
- Disobediences are accumulative and count in addition.

## DRESSAGE

Dressage/Western Dressage and Trail classes will be offered in alternating years. In years Dressage/Western Dressage is not offered at the Alabama 4-H State Horse Show, exhibitors may complete and submit a Southern Regionals At-Large Performance Review for Non-State Classes form if they have competed in Dressage at a show they attended in the same program year, receiving a test score of 60% or higher. The object of Dressage is the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse. In accordance with U.S. Dressage Federation (USDF) recommendations, it is suggested that horses be more than 36 months of age (as measured from their foaling date) before competing in any Dressage class. Dressage training makes the horse not only calm, supple, loose, and flexible but also confident, attentive, and keen, thus allowing it to achieve perfect understanding with its rider.

## PERSONAL

3. Exhibitors should wear hunt coats of traditional colors, such as navy, dark green, gray, black, or brown. Maroon and red are inappropriate. Shirts should be conservative in color with a choker/rat catcher, snap choker, or tie. Breeches are to be of traditional shades of buff, khaki, canary, light gray, or rust with high English boots or paddock (jodhpur) boots of black or brown. Riders are allowed to wear black or brown half chaps in English classes. A black, navy blue, or brown hard hat with fastened chin strap is mandatory for all over-fence classes and is recommended for all classes in the Hunter Division.
4. ASTM/SEI helmets are recommended. Gloves, spurs of the unrowelled type, and crops or bats are optional. Dressage whips are optional, but they must not exceed 47.2 inches (120 cm), including lash. Hair must be neat and contained (as in a net or braid). Judges must penalize contestants who do not conform; however, judges, at their discretion, may authorize adjustments to attire due to weather-related conditions.
5. Approximately 5–20 minutes will be allowed for each test. This includes warm-up time before the riding test. Specific time limit to be determined based on test used.
6. Rider must enter within 1 minute after whistle or bell has been sounded.

## SUGGESTED SCORING

1. Each movement of the test and collective marks (gaits, impulsion, submission, and rider) are scored on a numerical scale of 0–10. Coefficients of two or three are applied to selected movements and collective marks in each test. The score (0–10) for selected movements and all collective marks is then multiplied by the coefficient listed in that row of the table. The total score for each movement and collective mark is then tabulated to give the total points earned by the exhibitor. In the title of each test, the total number of possible points is given for that test. Below is a breakdown of the numerical scoring used:
2. Arena size for this competition may be 20 by 40 meters or 20 by 60 meters.

10. Excellent	5. Sufficient
9. Very Good	4. Insufficient
8. Good	3. Fairly bad
7. Fairly Good	2. Bad
6. Satisfactory	1. Very Bad

## PENALTIES

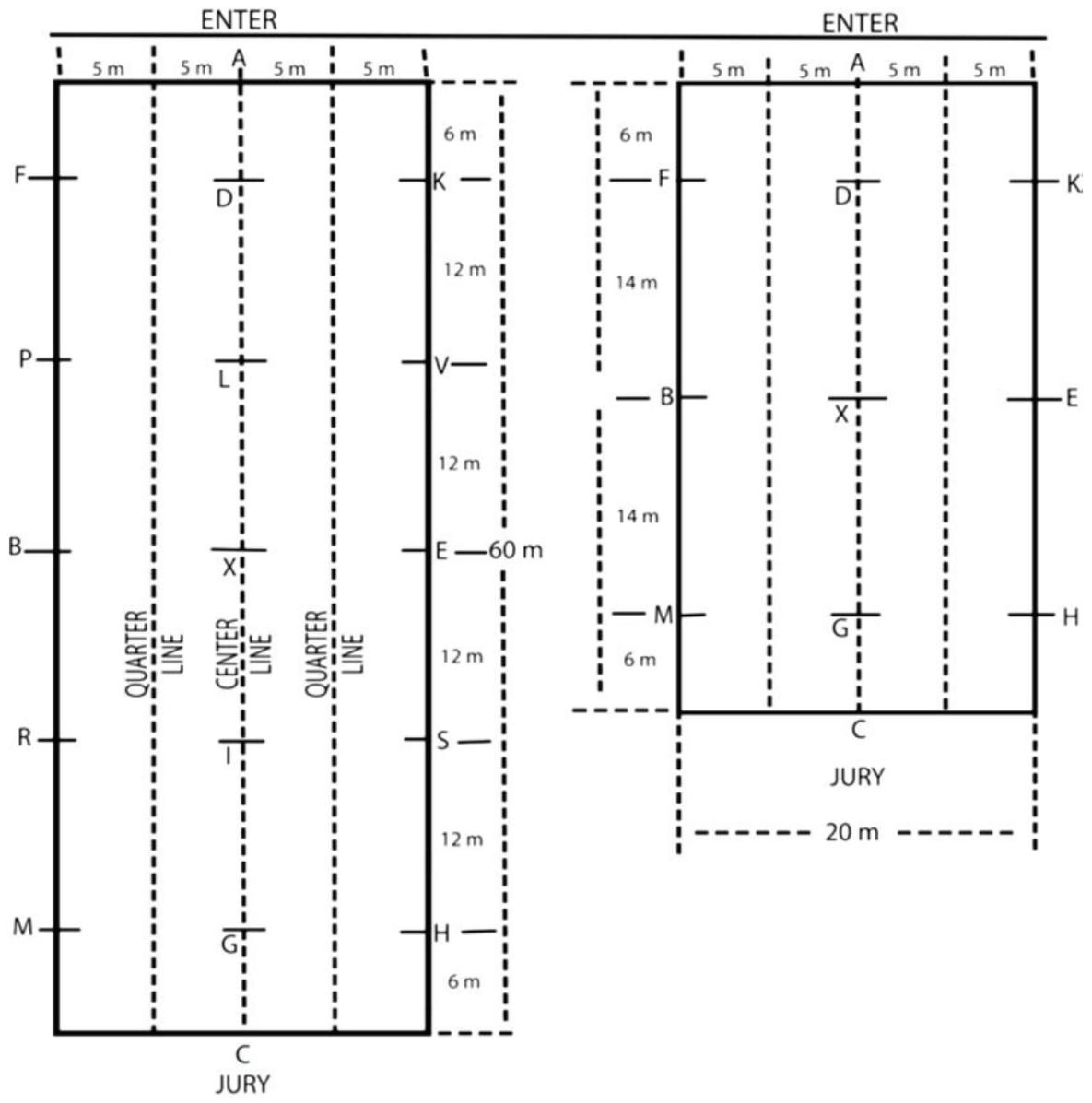
1st error: 2 points

2nd error: 4 points

3rd error: elimination

For more information about Dressage, visit the following websites:

- [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org): United States Equestrian Federation
- [www.usdf.org](http://www.usdf.org): United States Dressage Federation



## **GAITED HORSE DIVISION**

### **PERSONAL**

1. All exhibitors are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet with a fastened chin harness the entire time the exhibitor is in the arena. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor, the parents or guardian, or trainer of exhibitor to ensure compliance.
2. All attire that is accepted in the respective breed association and/or USEF will be permitted. All Gaited entries may be subject to inspection following the Walking Horse Owners Association (WHOA) guidelines for shoeing and inspection.
3. For more specifics on tack and equipment requirements, see the Gaited Division Tack, Attire, and Bits section.

### **GAITS**

1. Gaits vary depending on the breed being shown. Horses in the Gaited Division will be asked to walk and perform their favorite gait (running walk, pace, foxtrot, rack, etc.)
2. The quality of the saddle gait is judged by general impression, i.e. the regularity and rhythm of the steps, the cadence and impulsion. This quality originates from the horse having a supple back and well engaged hind quarters, and the ability to maintain the same rhythm and natural balance in all variations of the saddle gait.

### **GAITED PLEASURE**

1. This class includes but is not limited to non-trotting breeds such as the Tennessee Walking Horse, Spotted Saddle Horse, Racking Horse, Rocky Mountain Horse, Paso Fino, etc. All entries padded or unpadded can participate in this class.
2. Horses will be required to perform two gaits (walk and favorite gait) as appropriate for their breed.
3. Horses must back easily and stand quietly.
4. Horses will be judged on manners, suitability, and performance.
5. Horses are to be reversed at a walk.
6. Form is not to be sacrificed for speed.
7. Horses entered in this class may not enter the other breeds Gaited Pleasure class.

### **GAITED EQUITATION**

1. This class would include but is not limited to non-trotting breeds such as the Tennessee Walking Horse, Spotted Saddle Horse, Racking Horse, Rocky Mountain Horse, Paso Fino, etc. All entries padded or unpadded can participate in this class.
2. Horses will be required to perform two gaits (walk and favorite gait). Riders selected for rail work will enter the ring in a counterclockwise direction. Riders will proceed at least once around the ring at each gait, and on command, reverse and repeat.
3. Test will be performed individually and may include but is not limited to the following:
  - Pick up reins: A quick check on muscular control and sensitivity of hands.
  - Backing
  - Dismount and mount: To be done as quietly and gracefully as possible.
  - Group performance around ring: To check on maneuverability, ring generalship, etiquette, and sportsmanship.
  - Individual performance on rail; any or all gaits and test may be required. See rider in motion from both front and rear at all gaits.
  - Ride without stirrups: Any or all gaits may be requested.
  - Perform a figure eight, serpentine, or circles of various size and/or speed.
4. The judge will use the individual work scores to determine the top riders, who may be requested to perform additional individual work or rail work.
5. Those selected riders (or all riders if the class is small) will be required to work on the rail to determine final placings.
6. Rider's seat should be a natural, coordinated, and comfortable riding position and should in no way be rigid or exaggerated.

7. A rider should convey the impression of effective and easy control, with the general appearance of being able to ride for a considerable length of time with pleasure.
8. Ring generalship shall be taken into consideration by the judge. The appearance, presentation, and alertness of the rider and mount make the overall picture of utmost importance.

### **Mounting and Dismounting**

9. To mount, take up reins in left hand and place hand on withers. Grasp stirrup leather with right hand, insert left foot in stirrup, and mount. To dismount, rider may either step down or slide down. Riders are advised to check their girth for security before mounting.

### **Hands**

10. The hands should be held in any easy position; waist or elbow high, over pommel, with palms downward, slightly turned toward body, wrist rounded slightly. The hands should be in unison with the horse's mouth, showing adaptability as well as control. How and where the horse carries his head determines the height the hands are held above the horse's withers. Hands and wrists should be flexible and not held extremely separated. (From the rider's view, hands should be in a V shape, close enough for thumbs to touch.) The fingers should be closed firmly over reins, but not rigid. Pressure between thumb and index fingers is used to secure. Closed (or crossed) reins shall be used, with both hands on the reins, and the bight of the rein should be on the off-side.
11. Upper arms should fall naturally from the shoulders toward the hipbones and should be flexible. Elbows should not clutch the body, be extended forward, or spread away from the body. Hands should be in a comfortable waist-level position, depending on how and where the horse carries its head. The use of hands should be smooth and gradual without jerking or pumping at any of the gaits, or in the parked position.

### **Basic Position**

12. To obtain a proper position, the rider should sit comfortably in the middle of the saddle and find the center of gravity by sitting with a slight bend at the knees without the use of the stirrups. While in this position, have stirrup leathers adjusted to fit so that irons will be under ball of foot with even pressure on the entire width of sole and center of iron. The foot position will be natural and comfortable if the knee and thigh are rolled inward and the heel is slightly lower than the toes. From the front or rear view, the lower leg will be held naturally away from the horse, depending on the anatomy of the rider and the size of the horse. Knee should rest against the saddle.

### **Position in Motion**

13. The position in motion should be natural, coordinated, and graceful, attained only with practice. From the side view, a straight line can be drawn perpendicular to the ground through the rider's head, neck, shoulder, hip, and ankle. The rider's toe should never be any more forward than the knee, thereby, keeping the center of balance directly above the feet and ankles. This basic recommended position should be maintained at all gaits.

### **SUGGESTED SCORING**

Scoring may be on the basis of 0–100 with ½-point increments acceptable. An approximate breakdown follows:

- 90–100: Excellent equitation including body position and use of aids. Pattern is performed promptly, precisely and smoothly.
- 80–89: Generally excellent performance with one minor fault in appearance and position of exhibitor or execution of pattern.
- 70–79: Generally good pattern execution and equitation with one minor fault in precision or execution of pattern (performance), or appearance and position of exhibitor.
- 60–69: Average pattern that lacks quickness or precision, or rider has obvious equitation flaws that prevent effective equitation, or commits two or three minor faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.
- 50–59: One major fault or several minor faults in the performance and/or appearance and position of exhibitor that precludes effective communication with the horse.
- 40–49: Two major faults or many minor faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.
- 30–39: Several major faults or one severe fault in the performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor. Exhibitor demonstrates a complete lack of riding ability or commits a severe fault in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.
- 20–29: Exhibitor commits one or more severe faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor, but does complete the class and avoids disqualification.



**For more information**, contact your county Extension office. Visit [www.aces.edu/directory](http://www.aces.edu/directory).

---

Trade and brand names used in this publication are given for information purposes only. No guarantee, endorsement, or discrimination among comparable products is intended or implied by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

---

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating because of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the Alabama Cooperative Extension System Human Resources Department at (334) 844-5531 or the State of Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) at (888) 879-3582 or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Revised March 2026**, 4HYD-2099

© 2026 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.

[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)