

# MICHIGAN 4-H & FFA HORSE JUDGING CONTEST OFFICIAL RULES

The 4-H & FFA State Horse Judging Contest is held annually on the campus of Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. For more information please contact Roxanne Turner ([turnerr@msu.edu](mailto:turnerr@msu.edu), 517-546-3950) or Gwyn Shelle ([heyboerg@msu.edu](mailto:heyboerg@msu.edu), 517-432-5131).

Entries should be made and signed only by Extension Staff, and counties need to adhere to deadlines. Staff and members are responsible for accurate and correct entries. All participants must enroll in 4-H or be an FFA member.

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## Contest Objectives

- To observe and evaluate horses
- Develop good judgment and keen observations skills to make accurate decisions
- Defend these decisions with logical oral reasons

## Eligibility

- A. Contestants must **not have participated in any post-secondary coursework in the subject area of national 4-H competition** and must not have participated in training for post-secondary competition in the subject area of national 4-H competition prior to the contest.
- B. Teams qualifying for out-of-state competitions that have an open roster slot may have the opportunity to extend an invitation to an individual competitor from another county to join their team for the out-of-state competition. The individual must have competed at the 4-H & FFA Horse Judging Contest of the given year to be eligible. Any substitutions must be approved by MSU Extension state staff.
- C. Cloverbud Division
  - a. Cloverbud Age Requirements - Contestants must be at least 5 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year, and not be more than 7 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year.
  - b. Cloverbud participants will judge classes 3-6 only. Cloverbud participants will not be required to give reasons, but they are welcome to. Cloverbud participants will answer questions. Following Class 4, cloverbud participants should be monitored by their coach.
  - c. Cloverbuds will not be scored but they will receive recognition at the awards ceremony. Cloverbuds' cards will be available to coaches for review following the contest to encourage feedback.
- D. Novice (Junior or Senior) Division  
Will consist of members (all members) who have never competed in the State 4-H Horse Judging Contest. Participation as a Cloverbud does not count as "previous participation". Novice teams are not eligible for national or regional competition.
- E. Junior Division
  - a. Junior Age Requirements - Contestants must be at least 8 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year, and not be more than 13 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year.
  - b. Junior teams are not eligible for national or regional competition.
- F. Senior Division
  - a. Senior Age Requirements - Contestants must be at least 14 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year, and not be more than 19 years of age on January 1 of the current calendar contest year.
  - b. Eligibility rule: Senior members who have competed in an approved and authorized interstate contest (national or regional) in the same contest area, may not be eligible to represent Michigan again in the same approved and authorized national contest area, depending on the contest. **For example, 4-H members may only participate once at the Eastern National 4-H Horse Round Up in a given contest area.**
  - c. **To participate in a national contest**, no contestant may be older than 19 years of age as of January 1 of the contest year, and they must be at least 14 on January 1 of the contest year.

G. All Divisions

Participants must be currently enrolled in 4-H in the Michigan county they represent and be approved by their County Extension staff person. This does not have to be the county in which they reside. This can also be a secondary county to their other 4-H projects. Members are not required to own a horse or pony to compete in this contest.

H. National and Interstate Competition

- a. All entries must be authorized by the Extension Youth Horse Specialist and/or the State 4-H Leader.
- b. In the event that an eligible team does not have enough available members to compete in the contest, they may add other members from their county with the approval of the Equine Extension Youth Specialist and appropriate county Extension staff members. These members must have competed in the current year's competition and meet all of the eligibility rules for that contest.
- c. The first-place team will be eligible to compete at the Eastern National 4-H Roundup. However, the first-place team may choose to compete at a different contest such as Arabian Nationals or Quarter Horse Congress. In this instance, the second and third place team may compete at the same contest. For example, if a first-place team decides to attend Arabian Nationals, instead of the Eastern National 4-H Roundup, both the second and third place team may compete at Quarter Horse Congress.

**Number of Participants Per County**

- A. Each county may enter an unlimited number of teams plus individuals.
- B. Each team can be made up of three or four members. When four are entered, the three team members with the highest scores will comprise the team total. Counties with less than three participants may enter them as individuals. All participants are eligible for individual awards.

**Registration**

The team coach should check in at the registration area prior to the start of the contest. Each participant will be assigned a number and given other pertinent items. The contest will be in progress most of the day. Participants cannot leave once the contest begins. **NO CHANGES WILL BE MADE THE DAY OF THE CONTEST.** (Only bookkeeping corrections from Event Staff)

**Talking**

While the contest is in progress, there **SHALL BE NO TALKING OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF COMMUNICATION** at all (phones, smart watches, etc.). This also includes the reasons preparation time in the designated area. Contestants will not be allowed to practice their reasons aloud. Furthermore, coaches not assisting with the contest will not be permitted in the contestant area while classes are being placed. Any violation of these rules may result in the members card (or cards) being pulled and/or disqualification of the offending individuals or teams.

## Scoring

This shall be based upon the combined score of placings, oral reasons, and questions. Fifty points shall constitute a perfect score in each of the placing classes, and each of the sets of oral reasons. The sets of questions will have a maximum value of 25 points.

- In the Senior Regular Division, there will be eight placing classes, three sets of oral reasons, and three sets of questions for a possible score of 625 points per contestant, and 1,875 points per team.
- In the Junior Regular Division there will be eight placing classes, two sets of oral reasons, and three sets of questions for a possible score of 575 points per contestant, and 1,725 points per team.
- In the Senior Novice Division, there will be eight placing classes, two sets of oral reasons, and three sets of questions for a possible score of 575 points per contestant, and 1,725 points per team.
- In the Junior Novice Division there will be eight placing classes, one set of oral reasons, and three sets of questions for a possible score of 525 points per contestant, and 1,575 points per team.
- Ties will be broken by using the following tie breakers in order: 1) Reasons score; 2) Questions score; 3) Placing score on reasons classes

## Classes

- A. Eight classes of four horses each will be judged. There will be halter and performance sections. The halter classes will be selected from the following breeds: Appaloosa, Arabian, Morgan, American Saddle Horse, Tennessee Walking Horses (and other gaited breeds), Thoroughbred (suitable to become a hunter), Thoroughbred (suitable to become a dressage horse), POA (and other pony breeds), Paint, Palomino (Quarter Horse type), Quarter Horse, miniature horses and draft horses, although final selection may include additional breeds. There will be 2 halter classes in the arena at one time. Classes will be switched to opposite ends of arena after each class has been judged, so participants do not have to move. In addition, performance classes will be selected from the following: Western Pleasure, Saddle Seat Pleasure, Hunter Seat Pleasure (Hunter Under Saddle), Hunter Hack, Western Horsemanship, English Equitation, Suitable to Become a Dressage Horse, Western Riding, Trail, Reining, Ranch Riding, and Pleasure Driving. While backing horse in performance classes, they should be lined up on center line; only backed one time per horse.
- B. The showman of each horse in the classes will wear an appropriate number for identification purposes. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind and mouth. Performance classes will be judged as seen (unsoundness to be penalized accordingly). All tack and attire is considered legal.

## Oral Reasons

Senior Regular Division contestants will give oral reasons on two of the halter classes, and one of the performance classes. Senior Novice and Junior Division contestants will give oral reasons on one of the halter classes and one of the performance classes. Junior Novice contestants will give reasons on one halter class. All contestants will answer five questions each on two of the halter classes and one of the performance classes. The contestants will not be permitted to use notes while giving reasons, but their placing cards will be returned to them during the time they are giving reasons. Approximately 2 minutes will be allowed for a set of oral reasons.

## Questions

Contestants will be allowed to use their notes while answering the questions, but the horses will not be present.

## Rules

Rules in 4-H Horse and Pony Project Show Rules and Regulations will be followed except as described in the Classes section above. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind and mouth. Performance classes will be judged as seen (unsoundness to be penalized accordingly). All tack and attire is considered legal.

## Clothing

Contestants should not wear clothing that identifies a school or county during the reasons portion of the contest. Hats should not be worn at any time.

## Length of Classes

Approximately 17 minutes will be allowed to place each halter class, and approximately 15 minutes will be allowed to place each performance class.

### Time limits for viewing horses in halter classes:

Front view	1.5 minutes
Side view	3.0 minutes
Rear view	1.5 minutes
Side view	3.0 minutes
Moving horse to view movement	4.0 minutes
Close Inspection	4.0 minutes
(2 minutes per 2 groups)	
Total	17.0 minutes

## Group Leaders

Contestants will be divided into several equal sized groups prior to the start of the contest. Each of these groups will be supervised by at least one adult group leader. Each contestant is to remain with his or her group throughout the contest and is directly responsible to the group leaders.

## Judging Procedure

Horses will be judged primarily from the bleachers and will not be handled by the contestants. In halter classes, time will be provided for close inspection and to observe the horses' movement.

## Official Placings and Results

As soon as the contestants finish giving their oral reasons, the official class placings and cuts will be announced. The official contest results will be announced during the 4-H Awards Program.

## **Awards**

The following awards will be given:

- Recognition & awards to all Cloverbud participants
- Top 10 Scoring Individuals Overall in each of the four divisions
- Top 5 Scoring County Teams Overall in each of the four divisions
- Top 10 Scoring Individuals in Reasons in each of the four divisions
- Top 5 Scoring County Teams in Reasons in each of the four divisions
- **Top 2 Scoring Senior Individuals Overall:** Norma Agnew Memorial 4-H Horse Judging Scholarships (\$250.00 and \$150.00)
- **Top Scoring Junior Regular Individual:** Norma Agnew Memorial 4-H Horse Judging Award

## **County Volunteers**

The State 4-H Horse Judging Contest is implemented with many adult and teen volunteers. These volunteers are group leaders, announcers, class chairmen, tabulators, scoring helpers, runners, etc. Counties are asked to nominate Extension staff and parents to help and list their names on the registration form. All counties entered are expected to furnish at least 2 adults to assist with the contest. Coaches will not be assigned as group leaders.

## **Lunches**

NO LUNCHES WILL BE PROVIDED FOR CONTESTANTS. TEAMS MUST PROVIDE THEIR OWN LUNCHES. Concessions will not be available for contestants!

All lunches should be packaged for each individual participant with their full name and county labeled on it for distribution by contest personnel during the contest.

## 2023 STATE 4-H AND FFA HORSE JUDGING CONTEST SCHEDULE

**NOTE: TALKING DURING THIS CONTEST CAN RESULT IN IMMEDIATE DISQUALIFICATION**

**Sunday, April 16, 2023**  
**MSU Pavilion for Agriculture & Livestock Education**

- 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.      ♦ Registration - Main Lobby of Pavilion Write name & county on lunches
- 8:30 a.m.             ♦ Orientation for all participants, coaches, volunteers, officials (Pavilion Auditorium)
- 9:00 a.m.  
(approx.)             ♦ Judging Contest Begins
- 12:30 p.m.            LUNCHES DELIVERED BY STAFF AS YOU ENTER REASONS AREA  
ALL FFA Participants - Auditorium  
All 4-H Participants - Arena
- 1:00 p.m.             ♦ Oral Reasons Begin  
                              ALL FFA (reasons) Participants - Auditorium  
                              All 4-H - Arena
- 3:30 p.m.  
(approx.)             ♦ Official Reasons & Placings - Auditorium

### **Schedule of Classes** **(classes subject to change due to horse availability)**

#### Class Numbers and Classes

1. Tennessee Walker Halter– Place & Reasons (Sr Regular 4-H)
2. Sport Ponies Halter– Place & Reasons (ALL contestants)
3. Quarter Horse Mares Halter – Place & Questions
4. Paint Horse Geldings Halter – Place & Questions
5. Stock Western Pleasure - Place & Reasons (All but Jr Novice)
6. Hunter Hack – Place & Questions
7. Western Horsemanship (Pattern Class) – Place Only 4-H Only
8. Tennessee Walker Saddle Seat Pleasure (Gaited) – Place Only 4-H Only

**4-H Junior & Senior participants** will judge all classes.

**4-H Cloverbud participants** will judge only classes 3-6. They will answer questions. They are not required to give reasons but are welcomed to. Cloverbuds will be able to sit and watch classes 1 & 2 where they will receive extra help & directions from their group leader or a designated coach/parent.

**FFA participants** will judge only classes 1-6.