

Alleghan County 4-H Horsemaster Gymkhana Division A

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone # : _____

Name of Club: _____

Name of Leader: _____

4-H ID Number: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

4-H Age (As of 1/01/current year): _____



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Gymkhana - Competitive Games on Horseback!

In this booklet we hope to provide you with the knowledge that you need to have fun with your horse and perform the various gymkhana patterns correctly and safely.

Gymkhana events are timed events on horseback. The horse and rider act as one athlete. It's important for each to be in good physical condition and to know what they are doing. Gymkhana is fun for the spectator as well as the horse and rider.

A beginning Gymkhana competitor should have basic horsemanship skills and a good understanding of what the rules of the game are. Different organizations have similar rules for competing in the events offered. The classes may be offered by age group or skill level. The Allegan County 4H Horse Leaders Association offers different classes at different shows. To know which class you should enter, you need to be aware of the various shows that are sponsored by this 4H organization.

The Open Benefit show, offered in May, is open to the public with 4H rules applying. These classes are offered by age group. The Beth Wykstra Memorial show, offered in the summer, is for Allegan County 4H youth only. This show offers it's classes based on the 4H members tested skill level. In this show, you will compete against other youth that have tested at the same level as you. The Allegan County Fair show is offered by age group. These youth shows are governed by the county 4H rules. Generally at the fair, you will also notice a show sponsored by the National Barrel Horse Association (NBHA) and their rules apply to that show.

It's the competitor's responsibility to know the rules that govern the show they are entering. NBHA may require that you wear a western hat, a long sleeve shirt and jeans but not require that you button the collar or have neck wear. Michigan State 4H requires that competitors wear an SEI/ASTM approved safety helmet when running speed events. If you review the State 4H-rule book (4H 1145) you will see that neckwear and a belt is also required.

4H designs it's rules around safety of the rider and horse as well as offering the member the skills and knowledge required to advance to events which may be sponsored by NBHA, AQHA or other associations.

The rider's clothing can be fun, bright and full of energy with a real western look. In addition, the long sleeve shirt and long pants protect the rider from cuts and scrapes in the event of a fall. The helmet will help cushion the blow if the rider falls as well as prevent serious injury. The boots with a heel can help keep the riders foot from slipping through the front of the stirrup and getting hung up.

It would be very disappointing to be disqualified from an event because you didn't have the proper clothing or didn't know the rules that govern the show.

Just imagine if you and your horse just ran the fastest time of the day and in your excitement you hit your horse in front of the cinch. You only meant to praise the horse for a job well done, but the speed of the event and your excitement made the pat look and sound like a slap. Well, the judge's decision is final and to her it looked like you slapped your horse and you are in a 4H sponsored show where the rules specify that you can't hit your horse in front of the cinch. You've been disqualified for not following the rules.

You can get a 5-second penalty added to your time if you knock over or touch an obstacle with your hand. Holding the obstacle to keep it from falling is not allowed either. You can be disqualified if you and your horse are assisted into the arena, if you fail to dismount your horse before leaving the arena, or if you lose forward motion.

Spurs are allowed if they are humane, an over & under is not allowed in 4H. Single reins are required when running speed events in a 4H sponsored show. If you don't have single reins, you will have to tie your split reins. Some single reins are specially designed to aid the rider in the turns by adding knots to use as hand holds around turns. If the timer fails, you will be given a reride. Once you know the rules you can start learning the different events that are generally offered in Gymkhana.

Barrel Racing: Barrel racing, also known as the cloverleaf pattern, is one of the most popular patterns in gymkhana. Three barrels are placed in a triangle. Timing starts when the horses nose crosses the timing line. The contestant may choose to start the pattern on the right or left barrel. Regardless of the starting direction, she must make a complete turn around each barrel. The race is complete when the horses nose crosses the finish line.

Pole Bending: The pole bending event is made up of six poles set 21 feet apart in a straight line. The contestant enters the arena, runs along side the six poles, turns and begins weaving through the first five poles, turns around the last pole and weaves back to the far end. As the rider turns the last pole, the horse is raced in a straight line back across the finish line.

Kegs: Eight kegs are placed 21 feet apart in a straight line to make up the keg event. The contestant begins weaving the pattern as soon as she reaches the first keg. Completely turn the last keg and weave all the way back through the finish line.

Indiana Flag: The Indiana flag race is a triangle pattern similar to the cloverleaf pattern. However, weighted buckets sit on top of each of the side barrels, one containing a flag. The contestant can begin on the left hand or right hand side, running along the outside of the barrel, pick up the flag, race around the end barrel and deposit the flag in the bucket on the last barrel and cross the finish line. Contestants can be disqualified for knocking over the bucket, dropping the flag, hitting the horse with the flag or depositing the flag end down in the bucket.

Down & Back Flag: In the down and back flag race, the rider is given the flag at the gate. The contestant races to a single barrel at the end of the arena, deposits the flag into the bucket and races back across the finish line. All disqualifications are the same as with Indiana Flag.

Keyhole: The keyhole pattern is a broken circle of 22 feet with a throat of five feet wide. The sides of the throat can be either straight lines or angled lines five feet long. The keyhole pattern is drawn on the ground by the judge with chalk, lime or flour. The rider crosses the timing line, enters through the throat and turns around inside the circle, racing back across the finish line. The rider can get disqualified if the horse steps on or across the lines, turns around in the throat or fails to complete the pattern.

Speed & Action: Seven kegs are used to lay out the speed and action pattern. Four kegs are placed in a 12x24-foot square. Three kegs, spaced 7 feet apart, are placed at the end of the arena. The rider crosses the timing line, through the box, down and around the center keg and returns to a stop between the four square kegs without stepping over the line at the end of the pattern or spinning to a stop. There is a 5-second penalty for each keg knocked over.

Gymkhana: The name refers to speed events as well as an individual pattern. The gymkhana pattern consists of three barrels in a straight line placed equal lengths apart. The contestant crosses the timing line, turns a complete circle around the first barrel and weaves a figure eight around the next two barrels, finishing with a complete circle around the starting barrel and crossing the timing line.

In all events, it's a good idea to condition your horse for the unexpected. For example, if you practice the events at home or in your 4H meetings, use the chalk line so your horse will become accustomed to it. Try to use different color obstacles as well. You want your horse to concentrate on the job he has to do without being afraid of his surroundings.

When just starting out with a new horse or rider to gymkhana events, learning the patterns is most important. Help your horse learn the patterns by starting at a walk through the pattern. Do the pattern at a walk and sometimes a trot until your horse knows the pattern and what is expected of him. Only go to the canter when you and your horse have conquered the pattern at a walk and trot. For safety sake, never run your horse until he stops on command. The experts call this getting your Whoa before your Go.

Area experts were asked what important pieces of advice they could offer to help out the 4H member who wants to have fun with their horse with competitive games. This is what a few of them have to say.

BMP says, "Choose a horse that is physically and mentally capable of doing the events you're considering. Be realistic about the amount of time, conditioning and physical stamina this sport will take to build up a competitive level and to maintain that level. These sports should not be done if you're only willing to work with your horse on conditioning once every couple of weeks."

KLW says, "Learn your pattern very well at a walk before ever speeding up. Learn basic horsemanship before attempting speed events."

PMR says, "Take lessons and instructions from several different people that have experience in this area. Watch them ride & perform, see if this is a style that would work for you. By working with several different people, you can find or develop a style & method that will work for you and your horse."

One local veterinarian has four things he recommends based on injuries he sees in his practice.

First, the equestrian must be willing to make a commitment to a good conditioning program. The horse must be in good condition and it takes a lot of work to get them there.

Second, the horse must be equipped with the proper leg protection. The most frequent injury to the animal is caused by striking or cross firing. This vet prefers sports medicine boots versus a splint boot in most cases because of the additional support. However, he indicated that some horses who strike may require the extra hard padding that a splint boot offers.

Third, proper hoof care, shoeing and trimming is recommended. Keeping the horse trimmed properly, more frequently than if you're just riding trails. Keeping the proper angle for the horse is important to his performance.

Finally, the rider's balance and skills are very important. A sloppy or unskilled rider can do a lot of damage to the horses back. This is the second most injury that he sees in competitive horses.

Gymkhana is a fun activity to do with your horse. But first, you must have basic horsemanship skills and know the fundamentals of caring for your animal. Successful completion of the Horsemaster Level 2 test is a prerequisite to the Division A Gymkhana test and will ensure that you have achieved most of the basics.

The information provided in this booklet is a summary of information gathered from a variety of sources. Not all games on horseback have been presented for you today, just those that are more common in this area. For specific rules and guidelines, you should reference the rulebook from the organization that is sponsoring the events that you want to compete in.

Division A – Gymkhana Knowledge Test

Passing the Horsemaster Level 2 Test is a prerequisite to the Division A Gymkhana Test. Refer to State 4H Rule book for reference.

- 1. T/F Coming to a stop while running a pattern is okay and you may proceed without penalty.
- 2. T/F When running the cloverleaf pattern, the contestant must always start with the right-hand barrel.
- 3. What is the proper 4H dress code for speed event competitors?

- 4. Knocking over or touching an obstacle with your hand is considered a penalty by:
a. Disqualification b. 5 seconds c. 10 seconds d. reride
- 5. Which of the aides listed below is illegal under 4H rules?
a. Spurs b. bat c. over & under d. voice encouragement
- 6. What approval rating must a safety helmet have for use in 4H speed events?

- 7. Explain how a safety helmet should fit.

- 8. How must a contestant enter and exit the arena?

9. Please explain why the following gear is protective to the rider.

long sleeve shirt

safety helmet

shin guards

boots with a heel

10. How do you test for dehydration in your horse?

11. What are the benefits of using one piece reins for speed events?

12. How many poles are in the pole-bending event for horses and what is the spacing between the poles?

13. Explain the following patterns:

Down and Back _____

Indiana Flag _____

Keyhole _____

Gymkhana _____

14. when is a re-ride allowed? _____

15. Where can you not hit your horse? _____

16. How often is it recommended to have your horse trimmed by the farrier and why?

17. Draw the Pattern for the following events:

a. Kegs

b. Pole Bending

c. Cloverleaf

d. Speed and Action