



Western National Roundup 2027

Horse Judging Guidelines

Questions:

For general questions regarding Western National Roundup, please reach out to the management team at:

westernnationalroundup@gmail.com or (970) 491-8886.

For specific questions about the Horse Judging Contest, contact one of the following superintendents:

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Entry

1. For a complete list of all rules, please refer to the general rules at:
<https://co4h.colostate.edu/national-western-roundup/>
2. Each state may enter only one (1) team of four (4) contestants in 4-H and one in the FFA divisions. Teams may be selected by any means appropriate to the state they represent and must be certified as eligible by the State 4-H Leader/State FFA Advisor.
3. A team may have three (3) or four (4) members; when four (4) are entered, the three (3) highest overall scores will make up the team totals.
4. 4-H members who had previously participated in a 4-H Horse Judging Contest at the Western National Round-up are not eligible.
5. FFA members who had previously participated in the FFA Horse Judging Contest at the Western Round-up are not eligible.
6. Members who are currently, or have been in the past, members of university, college, junior college, or technical school horse judging teams are not eligible to compete in this contest. For example, a contestant who has competed in an official collegiate horse judging contest, either on or off campus, is ineligible to compete in a similar National 4-H horse judging contest. Similarly, they cannot be enrolled in a corresponding class i.e. Horse Judging or Evaluation class. Members who have completed more than one semester or quarter of academic or vocational training beyond high school or have completed a post-secondary course related to visual equine evaluation are not eligible to compete in this contest.
7. The superintendent(s) of the contest and the management of the Western National Roundup reserve the right to rule on any question of eligibility not covered in the rules.
8. No contestant shall wear any clothing, pins or badges that will in any way reveal his or her identity or state he or she represents. The contest will be held inside, so dress accordingly.

Method of Conduct

1. There will be a coaches' meeting held prior to the contest where coaches will receive full instructions, placing cards, applicable patterns and other pertinent materials for the contestants. Additionally, information where contestants are to report for the contest will be disclosed with any updates in regards to the National Western Stock Show Complex. All contestants will remain with the assigned group throughout the contest. Reasons and official placings will be given at a location to be announced.
2. Contestants shall wear no clothing, accessories or other marks of identification that may reveal their identity, state, or club represented. Hats are prohibited in the judging arena.
3. While the contest is in progress, there shall be no conferring between the contestants and anyone else except as directed by the Contest Superintendents or their representatives.
4. No cell phones or other mobile electronic devices will be permitted into the judging contest or reasons contest areas. For special accommodations, please contact a contest superintendent in advance of the contest.
5. Contestants are responsible for their own writing instruments and notepads for the purpose of taking notes for reasons classes. Contestants are permitted to use pre-printed materials during the contest, including but not limited to rule books, judging manuals, and score sheets. The officials will utilize the current year's rule book.
6. Three (3) to six (6) halter classes may be judged dependent upon availability to the superintendents. The following breeds may be represented in the halter classes: American Saddlebred, Quarter Horse, Appaloosa, Arabian, Paint, Morgan, Draft Breeds and Miniature Horses. Contestants will give oral reasons on 1-2 halter classes as determined by the officials. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind, mouth, and reproduction.
7. Four (4) to seven (7) performance classes will be judged. The performance classes will be chosen from Trail, Western Pleasure, English Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Hunt Seat Equitation, Saddle Seat Equitation, Western Riding, Reining, Ranch Riding, Western Horsemanship, Hunter Hack or Ranch Rail. Oral reasons will be given on 2-3 performance classes as determined by the officials. Horses in performance classes will be judged as they go. Officials may excuse any horse from a class if they deem it to be gait-deficient. In this event, the excused horse should be placed last on the contestant's card. The remainder of the class will continue to be judged once the lame horse has exited the arena.
8. The horses/riders/handlers will be designated by numbers 1-2-3-4.
9. Horses will not be handled by the contestants.
10. Fifteen (15) minutes will be allowed for contestants to judge all classes, including reasons classes. Contestants should make their observations, take notes and fill out their placing cards during this time, as reasons classes will not be announced prior to the start of the contest.
11. Two (2) minutes will be allowed for each contestant to give oral reasons to the judge. Contestants are not permitted to use notes while giving reasons. The contestant's placing card will not be offered to them upon entering the reasons room.
12. All tack and attire will be considered legal, provided it is used properly.
13. Contest Superintendents will reserve the right to replace one or more classes with original, professionally produced video classes in the event that weather or other emergencies make it impossible to have the minimum number of live classes required for the contest.





Superintendents

1. It shall be the duty of the superintendent(s) and event management to see that all rules and regulations are carried out.
2. The superintendent(s) will take no part in scoring the contest.
3. They shall be in charge of all contest records and shall have all ratings received, tabulated and totaled.
4. The superintendents will be responsible for all cuts on official placings.
5. All contest help will be directly responsible to the superintendents and shall assist them in conducting the contest.

Judges/Officials

1. Classes will be placed in accordance with the rules of the respective breed/discipline association rules.
2. The judges shall place the classes while the contestants are working in the arena from a similar vantage point as the contestants. Officials shall place the classes independently before conferring with other officials. The judges shall enter the final placings on the placing card, indicate the cuts to be made, and file that card with the Superintendents for final review and approval. Referee judge(s) may be used at the discretion of the Superintendents.
3. All reasons takers are expected to watch the class for which they are taking reasons. When the contestant has finished giving reasons, the reason listener will place the reason score upon the contestant's computer sheet for tabulation.

Description of Cuts

Cuts, as specified in the NHJTCA Handbook:

1. Horses are extremely similar; no obvious reason why one should be placed over the other; or, both horses have numerous faults, and none supersedes the others; placing is strictly a matter of personal preference; placing varies among official judges.
2. Horses are very close, but one horse has one or two qualitative or quantitative advantages; the majority of official judges would not switch the pair, but half of the contestants could logically switch the pair.
3. Horses are of unequal quality, but there is a logical placing in favor of one horse; either one horse has several faults or several advantages; all official judges would agree on the placing; no more than one-third of contestants would be expected to switch the pair.
4. Horses are not of similar quality; one horse has several decided advantages based on many points; all experts would quickly see the placing; no guesswork or personal preference required to make the placing; no more than 10% of contestants would be expected to switch the pair.
5. Large number of extreme differences between the horses; placing is obvious to everyone on first, quick observation; careful study is not required for the placing; pair consists of an inferior horse vs. a consistent winner; only very inexperienced, uninformed contestants would switch the pair.
6. Horse not even comparable; differences reflective of a champion quality horse or performance vs. a horse or performance that is not of show quality.
7. Largest cuts; differences reflective of a world-class halter horse vs. an extremely poor quality or lame horse; or a world-class performance vs. a disqualified performance.

Determination of Ratings

1. Fifty (50) points shall constitute a perfect mark on placing, and 50 points shall constitute a perfect mark on reasons.
2. Zero scores will be assigned in the following instances:
 - A. Unmarked card
 - B. Double-marked card
 - C. Unidentified card
 - D. Failure to turn in a card
3. Priority order for breaking ties:
 - A. If tied for a division award in Halter or Performance, the contestant or team having the highest reason score in that division will be listed first.
 - B. If tied for an award in reasons, the contestant or team having the lowest placing score on the reason's classes will be listed first.
 - C. If tied for individual or team overall award, the contestant or team having the highest overall reason score shall be listed first.
 - D. If still tied for either (a) or (c) above, the contestant or team having the highest score in placing reason classes shall be listed first.
 - E. If still tied, the contestant or team with the highest overall placing score will be listed first.
 - F. If still tied, the contestant or team with the highest single class reasons score will be listed first.
 - G. Coin flip will be the final means of breaking a tie for champion and reserve champion teams and/or high or reserve high individual.

