Contestants and Eligibility

1. Each county may enter a senior and a junior team. Counties may enter any number of participants. Contestants must be enrolled in 4-H in the county they represent. The three (3) highest individual scores will make up the team totals. Counties may enter less than three participants. They are eligible for individual awards. Participants may enter as an individual only, even if their county has a team.

2. Up to three counties may combine to form one team in a division, provided that none of the counties in the combined team has more than two of the members. Combined teams must pre-register together.

3. Contestants in the senior division must be 13-18 years old before September 1, of the current 4-H year. The junior division is for members 8-13 years old. 13 year olds may judge in either division. To be eligible for the national contest (winning senior division team), participants must be 14 and must not be 19 by January 1 of the current year.

4. 4-H members are not eligible for this contest if:
   a) He/she has participated in a previous National 4-H Horse Judging contest.
   b) He/she has participated in official post-secondary (university, college, junior college or technical school) competitive events of a similar nature in the same subject matter area. Neither can he/she be a member of a post-secondary team undergoing training in preparation of an event.
   c) He/she was a member (three high scores) of a past first place team in the senior division of the state 4-H horse judging contest.

5. Pre-register for the contest by e-mail to dean.aakre@ndsu.edu – send name of team (county or counties), age division, number of participants. Name of participants are not required for pre-registration, however if names are sent with pre-registration, substitutions are allowed at the registration table.

General Rules of Contest Operation

1. While the contest is in progress, there shall be no conferring between the contestants or between contestants and anyone else except as directed by the contest management. Ten points will be deducted from the total score for each talking infraction reported.

2. The contest classes depend on the availability of horses, riders, and schedule of the day. We will try to have a minimum of five and not more than eight classes:
   a. At least two but not more than four halter classes will be judged. Efforts will be made to provide a variety of breeds in halter classes. Oral reasons will be required on at least one halter class.
   b. At least two but not more than four performance classes will be judged. The performance classes will include at least one of the following: Western Horsemanship, Western Pleasure, Western Riding, Reining, or Hunt Seat Equitation. Oral reasons will be required on at least one performance class.

3. Horses will not be handled by contestants.

4. At least 12 minutes will be allowed contestants to judge non-reason classes and at least 15 minutes will be given contestants during reasons classes to make their observations, take notes and fill out their placing cards.

5. The 4-H Dress Code will be required. Participants must wear a solid color white, yellow, gray, or green shirt/blouse with a 4-H emblem prominently displayed and fastened securely on the front or a deduction of 25 points will be made from the individual score or the team score.
Judges

1. Classes will be placed in accordance with the rules of the American Horse Show Association or the respective breed association rules if applicable.

2. The judges shall place the classes while the contestants are working in the arena.

Scoring

1. The placing of the class is worth 50 points and oral reasons are worth 50 points.

2. 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. If a tie still exists, the contestant or team having the highest overall score will be listed first.
   b. If tied for individual or team overall award, the following criteria will be used to break the tie:
      • highest overall reason score
      • highest total halter classes score

3. All decisions of the official judges are final.

4. Ribbon awards will be presented to the top three teams and approximately top 50 per cent of participants in the division.