



Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project: Hippology Program Leader Guide

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Hippology (horse knowledge) contests provide a format for youth to demonstrate their level of understanding and breadth of knowledge of horse management and use. Testing formats include written exams, demonstrations of practical skills, animal evaluation, and oral presentations. As such, a variety of learning abilities and life skills are demonstrated. It is intended to be fun, friendly and a rewarding experience for the participants.

Using Hippology in Local Youth Program

Hippology activities can be a large part of the year round 4-H horse program. A detailed description of a Hippology contest is provided below. However, leaders and youth should realize that these contests, like other state, regional, and national level contests, are designed to be a part of a total learning program, not a blueprint for local activities. Groups are encouraged to take the contest format and design local events that are at a level to meet the needs of the local youth program. Additionally, noncompetitive activities that develop skills should be offered frequently.

Hippology activities can easily be conducted as part of a general meeting of the local club. Simple, short fun activities can provide the educational needs of meetings that will encourage attendance. Longer, more involved local programming can be developed as part of club outreach to the community and member development.

In order for youth to want to learn, the activity should be challenging and fun. Some ideas for local activities are listed below. Hopefully, after a little thought the problem will not be coming up with ideas, but to decide which ideas are to be developed and conducted.

- Develop a display of different types of grain or hay to be named and discussed as feedstuffs.
- Provide pieces of tack to be identified or assembled.
- Identify colors or breeds of horses from pictures in magazines or other easily obtainable resources.
- Take a short examination on terms from the Horse Quiz Bowl Manual and have youth 'grade' their own work. Examinations may take the form of cross word puzzles, word searches, or other 'fun' formats.
- Point out different parts of a horse using a model horse.
- In small groups, have youth provide advice to practical questions on caring for a horse. OSU Extension Fact Sheets are good sources of information for review and documentation on a variety of subjects.

Suggestions for a Successful Educational Experience

Hippology stresses the importance of life skill development for youth as well as increasing the youth's technical expertise about horses. Other horse project activities have the same goal. As such, leaders and parents should review Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project curriculum including:

- Oklahoma 4-H Horse Skills Manuals
- State 4-H Horse Judging Guide
- Parent and Leader Guide for Horse Quiz Bowl
- HorseSmarts Interactive CD

These materials are available, as part of the Oklahoma State 4-H Literature, by contacting Oklahoma Cooperative Extension offices throughout Oklahoma.

There are several suggestions for successful teaching when conducting activities that support Hippology.

- Older youth should be encouraged to develop activities to be used with other youth, and should be used as teachers for younger, less experienced youth.
- Local level activities should be noncompetitive or low level competitive to instill cooperative skills and a friendly learning environment. Too much or too frequent local level inter-group competition may limit the desire for participation.
- Activities should be age appropriate. Learning abilities of youth are largely dependent on age. Local Cooperative Extension 4-H educators can provide assistance on general expectations and interests of different age groups.
- Individual activities should be evaluated by the participants as well as adults, so future activities are designed for the interests and learning styles of the youth.
- Regardless of design, a central component of 4-H is the use of the experiential learning process.

Applying the Experiential Learning Process

The 4-H program uses the experiential learning process as the primary format for educating youth. Experiential learning takes place when a person is involved in an activity, looks back at it critically, determines what was useful or important to remember, and uses this information to perform another activity.

Because of their love for horses, 4-H'ers in the horse project are especially motivated to "learn by doing". The experiential process requires the leader to have a clear objective for an activity that relates to life skill development. Activities should be carefully planned to most effectively

reach those learning objectives. Here are the key steps in this process:

- Having the participant(s) **experience** the activity. Begin with a concrete experience. This can be an individual activity or a group experience, but it involves “doing something”.
- Having the participant(s) **share** the experience by describing what happened. Get the participant(s) to talk about the experience. Share reactions and observations. Let the group talk freely. Acknowledge ideas. Allow time to share responses. Encourage group members to answer questions posed by others. Avoid having the leader answer all the questions.
- Having the participant(s) **process** the experience to identify common themes. Discuss how themes, problems, and issues are brought out by the activity. Talk about specific problems and issues that the group discovers from the experience or recalls from personal experiences.
- Having the participant(s) **generalize** from the experience to form principles or guidelines that can be used in real-life situations (e.g., life skills). Find general trends in the experience. Draw out and identify the principles that are important - that apply to “real life,” not just the activity. This focuses on the key messages. Identify situations where the principles apply.
- Asking the participant(s) to **apply** what was learned to another situation. Concentrate on how the new learning can be applied to everyday situations. Discuss how issues raised by this activity can be useful in the future. Describe how more effective behaviors can grow out of what is learned.

Providing an experience alone does not create “experiential learning”. The activity comes first. The learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. This is a “learn by doing” or experiential process. Addressing each step in the process assures a plan that will reach a specific goal. The leader’s role is to go beyond simply showing or telling how to accomplish a task. The leader’s role is to develop activities that allow youth to develop solutions to problems that will in turn increase the youth’s life skill development. Simply stated, leaders are teachers, not doers, and they let the youth learn.

Contest Format

Contests can be designed to award both team and individual performances of team members; however, individual awards can not include scoring from the team problems portion. Scoring may differ between individual contests, as might topics of study and demonstration formats. As a rule, complete Hippology contests combine written and visual exams, practical skill demonstration stations, judging, and team problems. Each phase is usually weighted equally to determine overall team performance.

A. Examination Phase. This phase of the contest usually will include any combination of the following:

1. A written exam
2. Projected slides to be identified such as breed, color, color patterns, activity, proper appointments, etc.
3. Anatomy which may include external, skeletal internal organs, parts of gastrointestinal tract, male and female

reproductive organs, detailed anatomy of the foot, and detailed anatomy of the lower limbs.

B. Station Phase. This phase will consist of a series of stations or tables. Examples of stations that are usually used include:

1. Identification of:
 - a. Various types of saddles (actual or pictured) and parts of saddles
 - b. Tack, bits, bridles, horseshoes, and parts of shoes
 - c. Tools and Equipment, and assembly of specific parts of various pieces of equipment
 - d. Grains and forages used in equine rations including various forms and methods of preparation
 - e. Internal and external parasites based on actual samples, pictures, life cycle chart, and/or damage caused
 - f. Blemishes and unsoundness
 - g. Ages of equines based on teeth
2. Use of pulse rate, temperature, dehydration, anemia, etc. to assess horse health.
3. Measurements such as, but not limited to, wither height, shoe size, girth, collar size, gullet width, seat length of saddle, etc. may be required.

A. Judging Phase. Contestants will be required to place conformation and performance classes. Live animal classes are preferred, although video or slides can be used.

B. Team Problems: All teams will be presented with the same problems. Each team will have equal time to discuss among themselves the problem, immediately after which they will have to present an oral solution or series of suggested procedures relative to the problem. Each member of each team is encouraged to contribute to the oral presentation. Evaluation will be based on the understanding of the problem and completeness of the logic used in making the oral response. The official may ask questions of any or all of the team members to clarify the presentation.

Examples of possible team problems might include:

1. Balancing a horse’s ration.
2. Farm management recommendation for specific (i.e., breeding, training, boarding, nursery, lay-up, etc.) horse operations.
3. Considerations for a horse facility (stable to be used for a specific purpose)
4. Recommendations for selecting, locating, and purchasing horses for specific uses.
5. Behavior problems: causes, management of, and corrections.
6. Training and conditioning programs: equipment, schedules, methods, and nutrition.
7. Breeding and/or leasing contracts: specific clauses for insurance, liability, payments, care, termination, transport, etc.
8. Developing lessons on horse management for 9-11 year-old beginning 4-Hers. Where, how long, how much information, hands-on experiences, reinforcement, testing, and evaluation are topics of consideration.
9. Explanation of use or assembly of specific equipment.