

Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

Horse Shows: Showing in Western Horsemanship

4H-ANSI-417

Western Horsemanship class is designed for you to exhibit equitation and your ability to guide a horse through a pattern of basic performance maneuvers. The class is popular because it enforces the need for proper equitation and the ability to guide a horse through maneuvers that all horses should willingly perform regardless of their intended use. The class procedure usually requires riders to individually perform a pattern and then demonstrate the gaits on the rail with other riders. Performing the pattern accurately is very important. The rider's equitation and ability to easily guide the horse is also important. The horse should be attentive, willing, and responsive to the rider's commands while moving with a free, smooth gait. As with any competitive event, success requires preparation, practice and self-evaluation. This 4-H member guide provides questions for you to answer about how you prepare for and perform the horsemanship class. Members should have the chance to discuss answers with others and identify some of the common and various ways others prepare for and perform during shows. You will likely find that a rulebook will be needed, so ask your leader or parent for a copy before you work through the questions.

'Evaluating Myself'

Being able to objectively evaluate your actions is an important skill for success. This guide contains a list of questions to help you develop self-evaluation skills. Some questions may not have a single, correct answer. Some follow-up questions for your own thought and possible group discussion are provided for each question.

By completing this guide you will learn more about yourself and your actions to help in future decision making. Completing this with a group will allow you to learn from others experiences. Group discussions should be positive, encouraging and non-judgmental, so you and others will feel comfortable speaking with one another. Remember, different methods and actions are not necessarily wrong, and there isn't necessarily only one right or wrong answer to all the questions.

Do You Know the Rules?

As with any class, there are requirements for certain types of tack and attire. Which of the following pieces of tack are allowed in the Western Horsemanship class?

- Closed or roping reins
- Breaking hackamores
- Horse leg wraps
- Chaps

Thoughts and discussion: What are the recommendations for rein length for the class? Can you describe different types of attire you have observed with other riders in the class? How can the fit of your clothes affect the judge's view of your equitation? What type of bit do you or would you use if competing in western horsemanship? Why?

Equitation

Equitation refers to how your body is positioned while riding, and how you cue and guide your horse. Do you identify with any of the following statements?

- I have good understanding of what is desired equitation, and the reasons behind it
- I feel good about my equitation while I am riding on the rail, but patterns can make me feel pretty insecure about my equitation and ability to cue my horse
- I have a hard time looking right because my horse is slightly out of control and resists my cues, especially with patterns
- I feel comfortable and secure with my equitation when performing patterns and riding on the rail

Thoughts and discussion: How might different saddles affect your equitation position positively or negatively? What about the level of acceptance of your horse to the bit and cues from the reins?

Which Maneuvers?

How would you describe you and your horse's ability to perform the maneuvers listed below? Use descriptions such as:

- Out of control, scared for my life
- I'm in control, but it isn't pretty to look at or enjoyable to perform
- OK, I'm in control, but it takes a lot of effort on my part to keep the horse acting correctly
- OK, for most of the time, I think my equitation is good, and my horse is pretty dependable to do what I ask
- Better than OK, we do the maneuver with a little precision, style and smooth actions
- We are actually pretty good at this, my position is good, my cues are easy, and my horse responds quickly
- We are pretty good at this, but I would like to fix a small problem that seems to happen frequently when....
 - a. Circles at a trot and/or lope
 - b. Moving from a standstill to a trot or lope
 - c. Stopping at a specific place from a lope
 - d. Picking up the correct lead and changing leads
 - e. Turning different amounts after stopping
 - f. Moving in a straight line from one point to another at a trot or lope
 - g. Backing in a straight line
 - h. Picking up and slowing down to different gaits while working on the rail

Thoughts and discussion: What does precise or precision mean? Are there particular actions that your horse does routinely that you feel needs a lot of correction, i.e. slings his head when stopping, pinning his ears, running off?

You Be the Judge

Can you describe what an ideal maneuver would look like (your equitation and your horse's performance) when performing the following maneuvers?

Can you also describe one or two common errors that would be considered faults in the performance?

- Stopping at a designated place
- Circling at a trot or lope
- A 90 degree turn

Thoughts and discussion: Describe the position of a horse's body when it performs a medium sized circle precisely. Describe the horse's leg action when a turnaround is completed correctly.

Explain Your Cues

Can you clearly identify how you cue your horse for the following maneuvers?

- Walking followed by loping in the left lead in a straight line
- Circling at a lope to the right followed by a simple lead change and a circle to the left
- Stopping from a trot and backing five steps
- Trotting in a straight line followed by a stop and 360 degree turn

Thoughts and discussion: How often and when do you use your voice as a cue? Do you change your seat position to alter your center of balance when doing different maneuvers?

How Your Horse Moves

Would you describe your horse's movement through a pattern as:

- a. Generally a little lazy and sluggish
- b. Generally wants to go too fast
- c. Usually has a pleasant attitude but not very quick to respond
- d. Usually nervous
- e. Ok sometimes, but gets mad and acts up when I cue it to do certain maneuvers
- f. Generally pretty responsive to cues and able to do the maneuvers without much hesitation

Thoughts and discussion: Does your horse tend to perform one way during practices but act differently when showing?