

Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

Horse Shows: Understanding the Western Riding Class

4H-ANSI-419

The Western Riding class is designed for you to ride your horse through a pattern of lead changes. When done correctly, this class has a fairly high degree of difficulty because it requires a series of controlled, cadenced, precise lead changes in very specific places within the pattern. As with any competitive event, success requires preparation, practice and self-evaluation. This 4-H member guide provides questions for you to answer about your knowledge of and ability to perform the western riding class. Hopefully, you will have the chance to discuss your answers with others and identify some of the common and different 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.

The Goal of the Class

The Western Riding Class is judged on the quality of the horse's movement and lead changes, the horse's responsiveness to the rider, and the horse's manners and disposition. The horse should be able to change leads without breaking from a lope. A pattern with four or more simple lead changes (a break to a jog or walk between lead changes) or four or more failures to change leads will result in a disqualification. The pattern requires the horse to weave between and around several markers. To receive credit, the horse should have an even cadence of gaits, and easily change leads at the center point between markers. The front and hind legs should change leads simultaneously (during the same stride). The horse's head and neck should be in a relaxed, natural position with its poll level with or slightly above the level of the withers. Each pattern will also have a log that is in the path of the horse. The horse should cross the log without breaking gait or radically changing strides.

Thoughts and discussion: Can you describe some of the differences in leg movement that you might see if a horse is not 'simultaneous' in its lead changes? Can you describe what cadence means? Can you describe some of the possible ways horses might display undesirable disposition or manners when changing leads? What are some methods that you have been told about, read about or tried that teaches a horse to change leads?

The Scoring System

Patterns will identify smaller parts that are scored individually as maneuvers. Each maneuver can be scored on quality using a range of $-1 \frac{1}{2}$ to $+1 \frac{1}{2}$. These maneuver scores are added or subtracted from a beginning score of 70. The scoring system also identifies penalties for making certain errors such as not changing leads. These errors are given penalty points that are taken away from the sum of 70 +/- maneuver scores. So the final or overall score for the class is calculated by first adding or subtracting the sum of the maneuver scores from 70, and then subtracting the total penalties from this value.

'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 Equipment Rules?

Western Riding, as with all judged classes, has specific rules about allowable tack and attire. Which of the following pieces of equipment are allowed?

- Curb bit with a rough mouthpiece
- Leg wraps on the horse
- Breaking hackamore
- Chaps and spurs
- A snaffle bit with a D-ring for the rein attachment
- An English saddle

Thoughts and discussion: You may have answered 'depends' on some of the choices above. Explain when or how it would depend. When is it allowed to ride with two-hands on the reins?

Do You Know the Penalty Values?

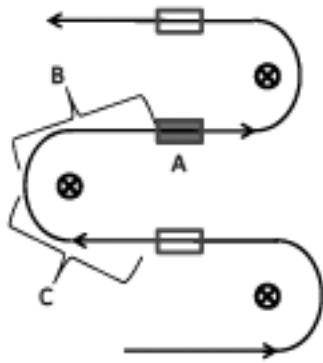
Penalties are identified in rulebooks, and can vary from a $-1/2$ to -5 points each time the error occurs. Using your judgment, rank the following choices in order of severity or what you would think should receive the lowest penalty to the greatest penalty. You can compare your ranking with values identified in a rulebook that includes this class.

- Break of gait at the walk or jog up to two strides
- Break of gait at the lope for one stride
- Lightly touching the log
- Being out of lead because of failing to change in a designated area

Thoughts and discussion: Which would receive more penalties, a light touch of the log with a horse's hoof or a touch that causes the log to roll out of position? How much more?

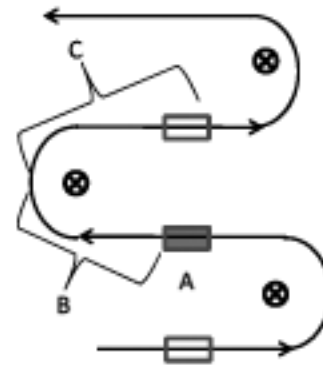
Understanding the Scoring System

Western Riding is a difficult class to accomplish with a positive score (greater than a score of 70). Negative maneuver scores will be given when movement quality is rough or not cadenced, the path of the pattern is not precise, or when the horse appears unwilling, unresponsive or out of the rider's control. Simply accomplishing lead changes, gaits and transitions with control is important, but is expected and at best is scored as correct on maneuver scores (0). Lead changes and gaits must be accomplished with evenness and smoothness for a positive maneuver score to be awarded. Lead change of the front and hind legs must occur simultaneously and the flow of the change should be in cadence with the gait. In addition to maneuver scores, there are several defined ways to receive penalty points. The location of lead changes is specified on the patterns as midway points between markers. Penalties are assessed when changes occur before or after the designated point (diagrams below). Incorrect leg movement during changes, i.e. non-simultaneous (front to hind or hind to front) or hind legs coming together during the change, are also penalized. Break of gaits are also penalized, as are incorrect movements over the log.



Early lead change penalties:

The designated areas for lead changes are in the middle of two markers (the rectangles on the diagram). There are no penalty points if the change is made within one stride of the middle (area A). It is incorrect to change before that area. A one-point penalty is given for an early lead change that occurs after the previous marker and before one stride of the middle (anywhere in area B). A three-point penalty is given if the change is between the last changing area and before the marker (area C).



Late lead change penalties:

The designated areas for lead changes are in the middle of two markers (the rectangles on the diagram). There are no penalty points if the lead change is made within one stride of the middle (area A). It is incorrect to delay the change. A one-point penalty is given for a late change that occurs anywhere after one stride of the change area and before the next marker (area B). A three-point penalty is given if the change is anywhere between the next marker and the next change area (area C). A five-point penalty is given if the lead was not change anytime before the next change area.