Western Horsemanship

Neal Smith
Extension Area Specialist – 4-H
Western Horsemanship
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- Rider Will Be Judged On:
  - Seat
  - Hands
  - Ability to Control and Show the Horse
- Performance of horse NOT more important than method used by the rider
Rider Position

- Sit in the Center of the Saddle
- Legs Under Rider
- Form a Straight Vertical Line Through:
  - Ear
  - Center of Shoulder
  - Center of Hip
  - Back of Heel
- Adjust Stirrup Length to Allow:
  - Heels Lower Than Toes
  - Slight Bend to Knee
  - Toe Directly Under Knee
Correct Position
Incorrect Position
Test Your Skills: Correct or Incorrect Positions?
Rider Body Position

- Body Should Always Appear:
  - Comfortable
  - Relaxed
  - Flexible
- Back Nearly Flat
- Head Up
- Neck Touching Back of Collar
- Avoid Stiff and/or Arched Lower Back
- Feet Placed in “Home” Position or Ball of Foot
Hands

- Both Hands and Arms:
  - Held in relaxed, easy manner
- Shoulders:
  - Back and down
- Upper Arm:
  - Straight line with the body
- Rein Hand:
  - Bent at elbow
  - Forming straight line from elbow to horse’s mouth
Hands

- When Using a Romal:
  - Rein hand
    - Hand held vertical
    - Thumb on top
    - Reins pass up thru bottom of hand
  - Rider’s off-hand around the romal
  - At least 16 inches of rein between hands
- Wrist:
  - Kept straight and relaxed
  - Thumb on top
  - Fingers closed around the reins
Hands

- With Split Reins:
  - One finger between is permitted
  - Not with romal
  - Tail of reins on same side
- Some Arm Movement is Permissible
- Excessive Pumping will be Penalized

Split Reins
Hands

- Reins:
  - Carried immediately above or slightly in front of saddle horn (12 inch box)
  - Only one hand is to be used for reining
  - Hand shall not be changed
  - Carried to have light contact with horse’s mouth
  - Excessively loose reins will be penalized
  - Horses 5 years of age and younger:
    - Shown with snaffle bit or hackamore
    - Legal to show with two hands on reins
    - No mechanical hackamores
Snaffle bit

Hackamore (Bosal & Mecate Reins)
Mechanical Hackamore
NOT “legal equipment”, for Western Horsemanship or Western Pleasure
Position in Motion

- Rider Should:
  - Sit the trot/jog and not post
  - Remain seated at the lope
  - Maintain vertical position at all gaits
  - Use imperceptible aids
- Exaggerated weight shifts is NOT desirable
- With Short Riders
  - Moving of lower legs should not be penalized
**Positives:**

Rider maintaining vertical position at all gaits; Keeping head up & looking where she is going; Following the arc of the circle with head up.
**Negatives:**
Rider looking at the ground or down at a cone;
Leaning upper body in the circle or to check the lead;
Excessive movement of the hand when steering;
*(Rider should learn to cue more with her feet)*
Mounting & Dismounting

- To Mount:
  - Take up reins in left hand
  - Place hand on withers
  - Grasp stirrup with right hand
  - Insert left foot in stirrup
  - Placing right hand on horn
  - Mount

- To Dismount:
  - May step down or slide down
  - Rider’s size will be taken into consideration
Class Routine

- Will Perform an Individual Pattern
- Pattern May Include:
  - Walk, jog or lope –
    - Straight line
    - Curve or circle
    - Combination of gaits or patterns (Figure eight)
  - Stop
  - Back
  - Turn
  - Sidepass
Class Routine

- Pattern May Include: (Cont.)
  - Simple lead changes –
    - Through the trot, walk or halt
    - In a straight line, figure eight or other pattern
  - Flying lead change –
    - In a straight line, figure eight or other pattern
  - Counter canter
  - Dismount and mount
  - Ride without stirrups
Class Routine

- Use of Markers/Cones:
  - Helps standardize patterns
  - Guides riders
  - Increases degree of difficulty

- Placement of Markers:
  - Carefully planned
  - Indicated on posted pattern
  - Well-supervised in arena

- Pattern posted at least one-hour before class
Class Routine

- Judging of Individual Work Will:
  - Begin and end at the indication of the judge
  - Exhibitors shall leave the arena at the signal
    - Regardless if the pattern was completed
  - Failure to complete the pattern
    - Will not be a disqualification
    - Scored accordingly
  - Pattern Scores Will Determine Call Backs
    - For rail work
    - May just work one direction
Riding the Pattern

- Be Ready When Called
- Know the Pattern
- Be Waiting at First Cone
- Correct Position at First Cone
  - Distance from cone
  - Horse’s position
- Visualize the Pattern in Steps
- Identify “Landmarks”
- Don’t Look at the Next Cone
- When Finished
  - Go to rail
  - Exit Arena
Evaluating Rail Work

Following the Pattern:
- Class may be placed
- Class may be asked to do rail work

Horse & Rider will:
- Walk
- Jog
- Lope

Could just work one way of the ring
May be asked to work both directions
Evaluating Rail Work

At the Different Gaits Consider:
- Rhythm & Cadence
- Expression & Manners
- Consistency
- Level Topline
- Length of Stride
Evaluating Rail Work

Walk

- Should show forward movement
- Horse should be “in frame”
  - Level topline
  - Head and neck level with withers
  - Face perpendicular to ground
- Horse should be “Quiet”
  - No tail wringing
  - No head tossing
  - No mouthing of bit
  - Ears forward and expressive
Evaluating Rail Work

Jog

Diagonal two-beat gait

Gait should have/be:

- Natural rhythm and cadence for the horse’s size
- Free flowing
- Even foot fall on each side
- Consistent pace throughout the class

Gait should NOT be:

- Short and choppy
- Different speeds during the class
Evaluating Rail Work

- At the Lope, look for a horse with:
  - Natural rhythm for the horse’s size
  - Balanced cadence (Three-beat gait)
  - Consistent rhythm and pace throughout the performance
  - Suitable length of stride, depending on size of horse
  - Maintains a level topline
    - No head bobbing
  - Not over-canted
    - Rear angled to the inside
Evaluating Rail Work

- Penalties should be assessed for:
  - Undue restraint with reins
    - In Horsemanship, riders will have light contact with the horse’s mouth
  - Wrong leads
  - Excessive speed or slowness
    - At any gait
  - Excessive cues by the rider
  - Excessively loose reins
  - Excessive pumping of the rein arm
Questions?