Head Tosser

State Fair a Huge Success

The North Dakota State Fair Horse Show had another successful year in 2007 despite the extreme heat. Numbers were just slightly down from 2006 with the intermediate group of exhibitors having the strongest showing of 41 participants. The junior and senior divisions were comparable with approximately 25 exhibitors in each age division. These exhibitors were joined by five members of the FFA.

Judges for this year’s show did an excellent job of keeping the show on task and judging according to the 4-H standards. Judging the performance classes was Theresa Slough from Kansas State University. She is an assistant professor in the Equine Program at KSU. The trail and speed judge was Gary Stauffer who is an extension agent from Nebraska. Both judges have extensive experience in the 4-H world which was seen in their judging standards.

All participants put forth a great effort at the fair and deserve to be commended. There were some new and exciting things happening at the horse show this year. One new award was the Sportsmanship Award. This award was given to a participant who showed overall leadership and sportsmanship in the arena, barn area and holding area. The recipient of this award received a belt buckle that was donated by Dr. Paulson. The winner of the Sportsmanship Award was David Morgan. We would like to thank Dr. Paulson for the generous donation and hope to continue this award in the future. Along the same lines as the Sportsmanship Award was the Horsemanship Award. Lane Larson was the recipient of this award. Congratulations to both of these 4-Hers, keep up the great work.

There was another strong showing for the horse judging contest this year. All the hard work and dedication was evident in the teams. Winners of the judging contest were as follows: Senior Division—Oliver County and Junior Division—Burleigh County. Congratulations to these two teams.

This year was a pilot year for the Quiz Bowl competition and interest was seen for this type of contest. For those of you unfamiliar with Quiz Bowl it is a contest that tests students knowledge of the horse, including but not limited to: nutrition, reproduction, management, health, general care, tack and equipment, unsoundness, diseases, and many other topics related to horses.

A big thanks goes out to Bob and Sharon Anderson who coordinate the show and do such a great job of making sure everything runs smoothly. Also, to the NDSU Equine Studies Staff and 4-H Ambassadors who spent the week at the fair helping out. To Dean Aakre for all the hard work and time he put into the fair. Also, a huge thanks to all the parents and volunteers, each one of you contributed to the success and efficiency of the show.
Winning in Horsemanship

Before a person can win in horsemanship they must first understand what horsemanship is and how it is being judged. Many think horsemanship is simply judged on the rider, much the way western pleasure is judged on the horse. This however, is not the case, as one must stop and think if the rider is exceptional, but the horse refuses to do what is asked of them the team will not be successful. Horsemanship is unison between horse and rider. It is all about team work and practice.

The Class
Horsemanship is normally a two part class, meaning participants will complete an individual pattern, and then may be asked to perform rail work. The standard for horsemanship is riders being scored on a scale of 1-20. The breakdown of the scale is as follows:

- 19-20: Excellent, shows accuracy, precision, and smoothness
- 18-19: Generally excellent performance with one minor fault in execution
- 16-17: Good pattern, one or two minor errors
- 14-15: Average pattern lacks promptness and precision
- 12-13: One major fault or several minor faults
- 10-11: Two major faults or many minor faults
- 6-9: Several major faults or one severe fault
- 1-5: Exhibitor commits one or more severe faults

The Key to Winning
The judge is looking for a rider who fits the ideal. This leads to the question, “what is ideal horsemanship?” This question will be answered differently by each horseperson you may ask. For me ideal horsemanship is a rider who shows professionalism and can maintain proper horsemanship position while demonstrating their ability to maneuver precisely and accurately through a set pattern. Once a rider has this mastered the class becomes a challenge to improve some aspect each time you perform.

Horsemanship Position
Below are the main points to consider when trying to achieve “perfect” horsemanship position.

- A straight line should be formed through the rider's ear, shoulder, hip, and heel
- Heels should be down and toes should be up and running parallel with the horse
- The widest part of the foot should be in the stirrup
- The rider's leg should have a slight bend
- The rider should sit squarely on the horse
- Back should be relaxed and flat
- Shoulders should be back and square
- The arm holding the reins should be in the same position as the rein hand
- Wrist should be held straight with thumbs pointing up
- Rein hand carried above or slightly in front of the saddle horn
- Elbows should be in at the rider's side
- Head should be up looking to the line of travel

Things to Remember
- The judge is not only evaluating you as a rider, but also your horse as a partner. As in showmanship, your horse should be in good condition, groomed, and tack fitted properly.

Pattern Pointers
- Transitions should be completed when the horse's should is at the cone
- Stops should be straight, square, prompt and smooth
- Pivots should be smooth, continuous, and a stationery pivot foot should be maintained
- Circles should be round and symmetrical
- Lines should be straight and equal distance from all cones in the line
- Backs should be straight and the horse should be willing to take the bit

Final Thoughts
Mastering horsemanship is a feat of finding body position and utilizing that position to get the best performance from your horse. Practice makes perfect, the more patterns practiced the easier it will be to perform come show time.
Horsemanship Faults

This page gives examples of just a few faults seen in the exhibitor and in the pattern. On the right side you will see some of these faults broken down into major faults, meaning if these are incurred the exhibitor should not place above anyone who successfully completed the pattern without these faults; some of these may receive white ribbons. Also, there is a list of disqualification faults, meaning if these faults are incurred the team should place at the bottom of the class, receiving a white ribbon. Keep in mind these are just a few examples to give you an understanding of what is being judged in the class.

Faults in Pattern
- Lead problems
- Circles that are oblong or off-center
- Stopping or backing crooked
- Stepping out of a pivot
- Rough transitions
- Off course
- Knocking down cones
- Horse evading rider’s cues
- Too tight or too loose of rein
- Pattern performed without control or guidance from the rider
- Break of gait

Major Faults
- Touching horse
- Grabbing saddle horn or any other part of the saddle
- Imprecise pattern work
- Rough transitions
- Incorrect lead that is not corrected
- Severe break of gait

Disqualifications- Should receive white ribbon
- Failure to wear correct number
- Willful abuse
- Spurring in front of the shoulder
- Severe disobedience or resistance by horse, including, but not limited to, rearing, bucking or pawing
- Loss of control of the horse
- Excessive schooling or training
  - Broken pattern - inclusion or exclusion of maneuvers, starting the pattern or completing maneuvers on the incorrect side of the cone
- Illegal use of hands on rein
  - Using two hands on reins with a curb bit
- Illegal equipment
- Knocking over cone

Faults in Exhibitor
- Clothing that is not clean and fitted
- Stiff or artificial posture
- Loose legs with open knees
- Slouching
- Poor position of rider in the saddle
- Over-cueing or excessive handling of the horse
- Not maintaining proper contact with the horse
- Shoulders that are not square and straight
- Not maintaining correct arm position
- Looking to check leads
Horsemanship Examples

Correct leg, heel, and foot placement. Notice how the heel is in line with the hip. Also, the heel is down and the ball of her foot is in the stirrup with toe pointing forward.

This rider is sitting very forward in her seat, causing her to lose the correct horsemanship line and will result in less effective control of her horse.

This rider’s leg is way too far forward, rocking the rider back in the saddle.

This rider’s leg is too far back, rocking the rider forward in the saddle and also causing the heel to go up and toe to point down.

When comparing the seat and arm positions, of the three riders below, rider 2 should stick out.

Notice how deep rider 2 is in her seat. In addition, her shoulders are open and arms are held with the correct amount of bend and placed at the saddle horn. If we were going to criticize her for anything it would be her elbows being slightly too far back.

Though this rider is now sitting deep in her saddle, her rein arm is too straight and her free arm is held in a bad position causing her shoulders to fall forward and upper body to look uneven.
Exciting Changes for 4-H

In keeping with the ever changing 4-H program it is also necessary to update member materials. Though minor changes have been made to the existing 4-H rulebook over the years, it has not been totally revamped in over ten years. With this in mind, over the last several months the faculty at NDSU along with the 4-H Horse Advisory Council have been working on updating and adding to the existing North Dakota 4-H Rulebook.

In the new books you will find many additions and clarifications to the tack and attire sections concerning what is legal and what is illegal. In an attempt to clear up any misconceptions or misunderstandings about certain classes you will find a class description, procedure, and rule section for the various classes offered in 4-H.

Reining patterns have been updated to be similar to what a true reining pattern entails. Along the same lines you will find multiple new scoring systems for classes such as reining, western riding, and trail. These systems will give 4-Hers an understanding of what they are being penalized or credited for.

You will also find a collection of pictures and diagrams to clarify the new point systems.

This update is a move towards standardizing the 4-H programs throughout the state. In addition it should serve as a rulebook, meaning the procedures and rules within this book should be followed by each county and club in order to guide the 4-Hers through consistency of expectations.

The new rulebooks are expected to be completed and available by February of 2008. I encourage everyone to call or stop by your extension office and pick up a copy of the rulebook. Be sure to read through it and become familiar with the changes. The rules in this book will be implemented in 2008.

Judges Certification Program

Another new and exciting change to the 4-H program beginning this coming year is a judge’s certification program. With a new rulebook and changing trends in the horse world it is very important that our judges are aware of the current rules.

The job of a judge is to encourage and mentor the 4-H participants in a positive way that encourages improvement. In doing this it is very important that the 4-Her understands what they are doing wrong and ways of fixing the problems to improve performance. 4-Hers look to judges for this guidance and when rules are not conveyed properly or understood this discourages instead of encourages the participants. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make sure everyone is judging by similar standards. This will help to alleviate frustration among 4-Hers who may be hearing contradicting comments from varying judges.

This is a topic that is addressed in many other states and the feedback from the implementation of these programs is very positive. Upon review of multiple other programs we have put together a program that will be very informative and beneficial to the participants and will also positively affect the shows judged.

There will be multiple judging seminars conducted for current judges as well as prospective judges. These seminars will cover new rules, changing trends, and standards for judging. They will also give people a chance to clear up any questions or concerns they may have with the new rules. The seminars will be a full day beginning in the morning with rulebook information, breaking for lunch, and then judging classes in the afternoon. At the end of the seminar there will be a written and judging test. Each of these exams must be passed with a set score in order to be placed on the current judging list. Judges will be required to retest every three years to remain on the list.

Counties will be strongly urged to only hire judges from this list for all 4-H functions. This will help to keep consistency of judging in our 4-H program.
March

- 4-9– ND Winter Show, Valley City.  www.northdakotawintershow.com
- 29-30– ND Horse Council Convention, Radisson Hotel, Bismarck, ND www.ndhorsecouncil.org

April

- 4-6– Barrel Horse Workshop, Judy Myllymaki, Valley City.  For info. call Teri Berg-Crooks 701-840-8028
- 12-13-NDSU Horse Fair, NDSU Equine Center
- 25-27-MN Horse Expo

Look for flyers about upcoming events and clinics at the NDSU Equine Center.

NDSU Equine Studies
For more information or to register contact:
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You Might Be A Horse Person If...

- Hay twine is your solution to EVERYTHING
- The only hats you own are a cowboy hat and a helmet
- Your horse’s family tree is more complete than your own
- You are the one stealing all the socks for tail bags
- You cluck to people and other animals to make them move
- You own more bobby pins than the beautician
- You have favorite wheelbarrows, shovels and pitchforks
- Your nice clothes are the ones without horse hair on them
- Every paper you write has to do with horses
- Your horse’s stall is cleaner than your room
- You plan your entire social life around horse shows and practice
- You say whoa to the dog
- You’d pay $200 + for a show shirt but refuse to pay more than $20 for jeans
- Your horse has more shoes than you do
- You spend hundreds of dollars on a show for a 95 cent ribbon
- You are not ashamed to wear a hairnet and enough makeup for twenty people

Adapted from http://www.emmitsburg.net/humor/index_list/horse_index.htm

We’re on the Web
www.ag.ndsu.edu/ars/equine_studies/resources/headtoss.htm

Mark April 12th and 13th on your calendars for another exciting NDSU Horse Fair!!