

## VIRGINIA 4-H STATE HORSE JUDGING CONTEST RULES AND REGULATIONS

**OBJECTIVES:** The primary objective of the Horse Judging contest is to provide, in a friendly but competitive setting, an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate their knowledge of judging conformation and performances classes of a variety of breeds and disciplines. It is hoped that this contest will generate new friendships and be a rewarding experience for the contestants.

### I. ELIGIBILITY & GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Each contestant must be a bonafide 4-H Club Horse Project Member in Virginia.
2. Eligibility for contestants must be met for the Virginia 4-H Recognition and Awards Handbook and is the responsibility at all levels of the respective Extension Agent. Members must meet the eligibility requirements for judging.
3. Each county or unit will be eligible to enter all junior and senior 4-H members that are qualified by participation at the unit level. A team must be comprised of at least three members to be considered for team awards. One or two individuals from a county may compete if a team of 3 or 4 cannot be assembled. The qualifying event may include a county Horse Judging contest, clinic or other organized training session that provides a simulated contest experience that can properly prepare contestants to compete. EquiSmartz may not be contestant's first contest experience of this type. Any scholarships must be arranged for at the local level.
4. Individuals 19 years of age or older before January 1st of the contest year are ineligible. **Junior** contestants must turn 9 years of age on or before September 30 of the year in which the contest is held. **Senior** contestants are those 14 years of age or older before January 1st and junior contestants are under 14 years of age as of January 1st of the contest year. This age eligibility conforms to the National 4-H Horse Contest Rules and Regulations. After members have served two years on the State Horse Judging Team or competed at Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup, whichever is first, they are ineligible to further compete in 4-H Horse Judging.
5. 4-H contestants may compete in one of 4 divisions. **Junior** and **Senior** are explained above, and are based on age.
  - **Senior Novice** division is for seniors who have not previously competed in the Virginia State 4-H Horse Judging Contest, thus they are in their **first** year of competition at the state contest. Senior Novice contestants are not required to give reasons, however may have the option at the contest to deliver a set of unjudged reasons to a non-official. Competition for Senior Novice is as an individual only.
  - **Senior** contestants will give 4 sets of reasons (2 on halter classes, 2 on performance classes). Competition for Seniors is both individual and team, with the top 3 scores on a team being used to calculate team totals.
  - **Junior** contestants will give 2 sets of reasons (1 halter, 1 performance). This is not optional. Competition for Juniors is both as team and individual, with the reasons score being added into the total score, and the top 3 scores on a team will be used to calculate team totals.
  - **Junior Novice** contestants are not required to give reasons but may have the option at the contest to deliver a set of unjudged reasons to a non-official. Junior Novice contestants may have competed in a previous State 4-H Horse Judging Contest. Junior Novice competition is as individual only.

6. Contestants may compete in both 4-H and FFA division. Note eligibility for 4-H members stated above. The two contests will be scored independently and will run concurrently. Contestants must be pre-entered separately for each contest.
7. The State 4-H Horse Judging Team will consist of *(new for 2021)* **10** top-placing senior individuals (NOT Sr. Novice) in the State Contest. These individuals will be required to attend training sessions during the summer. Contests in which they will compete are held in late summer and during the fall. Four Senior members of the state horse judging team will be invited to represent Virginia in the Eastern National 4-H Roundup Horse Judging Contest at Louisville, KY, with the entire two team State team being invited to participate at the Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championship Horse Judging Contest. After members have served two years on the State Horse Judging Team or competed at Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup, whichever is first, they are ineligible to further compete in 4-H Horse Judging. *(new for 2021)* **Decision Day: State team members must declare their decision to represent Virginia as the Eastern National 4-H Roundup Team and as the Southern Regional Team no later than one week after the date that EquiSmartz results are announced. Members on the Eastern National Team may not be members on another state Eastern National contest team. Final decisions rest with the state team coach(es).**
8. Units should encourage all 4-H horse members to study and compete for the unit teams on an open participation basis. Unit team members may be selected by contests or by any method acceptable and designated by leaders and approved by the extension units.

## II. STATE CONTEST

The state contest will be scheduled during the spring of each year. Entry forms will be sent out in advance. No team of less than three members may compete as a team at any level but all contestants may compete for individual awards. Teams must be county teams or can be from neighboring counties as long as a particular county does not have enough members to make up one full team and all members have practiced and competed together at the county level.

## III. PREPARATORY CONTESTS

Contests at local or district level may include separate contests for juniors and seniors. The state contest will be for both junior and senior contestants; however, a team cannot be a mix of juniors and seniors.

## IV. AWARDS

1. Awards will be presented to the top ten individuals in the Halter division, Performance division, Reasons division and Overall.
  2. Each member of the top ten teams in the Halter division, Performance division, Reasons division and Overall will receive awards.
- County and district awards are to be arranged for at that level. State awards will include appropriate ribbons and plaques or trophies and coach awards.

## V. RULES

These rules have been approved by the State 4-H Equine Advisory Council and appropriate 4-H and Animal Science administration. Any suggestions for revisions should be made to the respective advisory council member.

All rules, contest conduct, results, questions, etc. are final and non-protestable at the conclusion of the contest and all inquiries will receive the answer as noted in this sentence. All participants accept these rules upon entry and involvement in the program.

The State Horse Judging Team will be eligible to represent Virginia in the National Championship competition. (All arrangements - training, travel and finance to be arranged for at local level). The state team must also meet specific rules from the national contest for participation. Counties may devise their own rules and procedures but the rules in this outline will apply for state. Teams going to nationals will need to practice extensively to be competitive. Any member participating in the national contest will be ineligible to participate in the state program in this contest area in the future.

## VI. THE CONTEST

### Judging Classes

1. 4-6 Halter and 4-6 Performance classes are used trying to use several different breeds of horses. Halter horses are judged as sound of limb, eye, wind, mouth and reproductive organs, Performance horses judged as they go in the class and all tack and attire is considered legal.
2. Rules for placing the classes are United States Equestrian Federation rules or the respective breed rules.
3. Final placing for each class and the cuts for the class are determined by the official judges for the contest. Three judges and a referee judge are suggested as an appropriate number. If additional reasons takers are needed, they should be in the ring observing the class that they will be listening to.
4. Possible Halter and In Hand Classes:(Not limited to this list)

Saddlebred	Plantation Horses
Morgan	Hunter Ponies
Quarter Horse	Hunter-in-Hand
Appaloosa	Arabian
Stock Horses	Walking Horse
Draft Horse	Miniature Horses
Ponies of America	Sport Horse in Hand
Friesians	Hackney Ponies
Connemaras	Mules

5. Possible Performance Classes (under saddle): (Not limited to this list)

English Pleasure	Hunter Pleasure
Western Pleasure	Country English Pleasure
Plantation Pleasure	Mountain Pleasure
(May Specify Breed in the Pleasure Classes)	
Hunter Under Saddle	Reining
Driving	Hunter Hack
Horsemanship	Equitation (Reasons in any equitation)
Racking	Walking Horse

### Reasons

1. Are given to the official judges/reasons takers by each contestant. Four sets of reasons are required of Senior youth (*2 halter / 2 performance*), two sets by Juniors (*1 halter / 1 performance*), Jr. and Sr. Novice do not give reasons, but may have the option to give an unjudged set to a non-official. FFA Seniors will give four sets of reasons (*2 halter / 2 performance*) and FFA Juniors will give one set of reasons (*halter or performance*).
2. Reasons are not timed and time penalties are not assessed.
3. Youth have a minimum of 20 minutes to prepare each set of reasons.

4. The reason room is controlled to keep a relative equal time interval between each set of reasons a youth gives (i.e. If one set of reasons is moving faster, there will be a time out called to allow other reason sets to catch up).
5. At the end of the contest Judges will give the official placings and comments on the classes to the youth.

### **Tabulation and Tie Breaks**

Scoring drops the low person from the team in each division (halter, performance and reasons) and the low person from the overall total score.

### **HALTER DIVISION**

#### **Tabulations:**

- Team scores calculated by dropping the team member with the lowest total score in the halter division.

#### **Tie Breaks:**

1. Highest reasons score in halter division
2. Lowest placing scores for halter reasons classes
3. Highest performance total score
4. Highest reasons score in performance division
5. Lowest placing scores for performance reasons classes

### **PERFORMANCE DIVISION**

#### **Tabulations:**

- Team Scores calculated by dropping the team member with the lowest total score in the performance division

#### **Tie Breaks:**

1. Highest reasons score in performance division
2. Lowest placing scores for performance reasons classes
3. Highest halter total score
4. Highest reasons score in halter division
5. Lowest placing scores for halter reasons classes

### **REASONS DIVISION**

#### **Tabulations:**

- Team Scores calculated by dropping the team member with the lowest total score in the reasons division

#### **Tie Breaks:**

1. Lowest placing in all reasons classes
2. Highest placing score for all non reasons classes
3. Highest reasons score in performance division
4. Lowest placing in performance reasons classes

### **OVERALL AWARDS**

#### **Tabulations:**

- Team Scores calculated by dropping the team member with the lowest overall score

**Tie Breaks:**

1. Highest overall reasons scores
2. Lowest placing in reasons classes
3. Highest placing score for all non reasons classes
4. Highest reasons score in performance division
5. Lowest placing in performance reasons classes

*\*The 2021 virtual contest is the final contest that decides the winners moving on to Eastern Nationals and Southern Regionals. See the 2021 alterations for the Virtual State Contest (as a result of COVID-19) posted on the EquiSmarz website page - <https://ext.vt.edu/4h-youth/horse/events/equismartz.html>*