



WASHINGTON STATE 4-H GROOM SQUAD CONTEST RULES

WSU EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PURPOSE

The purpose of this contest is to provide 4-H youth with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to work together in a safe and humane manner to groom and prepare a horse for show.

STATE CONTEST ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION

1. The Washington State 4-H Groom Squad Contest is held during State 4-H Fair.
2. Each county is invited to send one team. The team will be composed of three (3) senior 4-H members selected in any manner deemed appropriate at the county level.
3. Members of the county groom squad team may participate in this event without being entered in other classes of the 4-H Horse Division at the State 4-H Fair.
4. Registration for the team will be completed by county 4-H staff following State 4-H Fair registration requirements (e.g., Fair Entry).
5. All 3 members must be enrolled in 4-H Online within the current 4-H program year and be senior age 4-H members as per State 4-H age policy.
6. **Procedures for COUNTY CONTESTS are outlined on the final page of this document.**

PROCEDURE

1. This contest includes three phases: written quiz, horse grooming, and showmanship exhibition. One member shall take the written quiz, another shall exhibit the horse in showmanship, all three members shall groom the horse.
2. QUIZ: One team member will complete a written quiz prior to the beginning of the grooming/arena event. The [WA State 4-H Equine Contest Approved Source List](#) is found on the [WSU 4-H Equine website](#) under Contest Resources and contains all the resources used to create questions for this contest quiz.
3. GROOMING: Thirty minutes will be allowed for grooming the horse. One team member will hold the horse. The holder may rotate. The holder may work on grooming the horse as long as it is done in a safe manner. The horse must always be under control.
4. SHOWMANSHIP: Following grooming, team members will have 15 minutes to practice showing the horse. All members may assist but only one will be selected by the team to participate in the final showing.

HORSE SELECTION

1. Each county team must furnish a horse. The horse must be sound and safe to handle.
2. For the State contest, the team must use a horse on exhibit at State 4-H Fair (i.e., a team cannot bring a horse in for the contest). If the county has horses already at State Fair, the county groom squad team will choose one of their county's horses. If the county does not have horses at State fair, the State Groom Squad Contest Coordinator and State Fair Horse Superintendent will assist in selecting the horse.
3. Selection of all horses will be under the supervision of the State 4-H Fair Equine Superintendent, 4-H Fair Manager, and/or State Groom Squad Contest Coordinator, all of which have authority to change horses if a horse is deemed unsound or unsafe.

GROOMING EQUIPMENT

1. Each team must furnish all their own grooming equipment.
 - a. Minimum Suggested:
 - i. 4' x 4' tarp or pad to lay equipment on
 - ii. 2 Curry combs (rubber, plastic, or metal)
 - iii. 1 soft bristle brush
 - iv. 1 hard bristle brush
 - v. Mane and tail comb or brush
 - vi. Grooming rags – dry, with no grooming aids added
 - vii. Hoof pick
 - viii. Bucket – all water used must be contained in a bucket
 - ix. Shavings
 - b. Additional Allowed:
 - i. Show halter and lead
 - ii. Bot block
 - iii. Shedding blade
 - c. Not Allowed:
 - i. Electric equipment
 - ii. Commercial products (soap, hoof black, mane and tail whitener, show sheen, cornstarch, chalk, oil, etc.)
 - iii. Razor blades or any items containing any type of razor blade
 - iv. Scissors
 - v. Bot knife
 - vi. Spray containers

CONTEST ATTIRE

4-H members are responsible for representing the WA State 4-H Program. As with all 4-H activities, attire is governed by suitability for the activity and considerations outlined in WA State 4-H Policies and Procedures and the 4-H Member Code of Conduct. Attire should reflect the mission and values of the 4-H program as a premier youth development program.

1. Boots are required. All team members must wear boots.
2. Team uniforms are optional. Teams may (and often do) choose to dress similarly (e.g., matching pants, 4-H t-shirts, polos, long-sleeved shirts).
3. County-identifying attire is allowed and may be worn.
4. Showmanship attire is required for the Showmanship class as outlined in the [WA 4-H Equine Program Rule Book](#). If needed, the team member showing the horse in Showmanship may change into show attire during the 15 minutes allotted for Showmanship practice.
5. It will be the judgement of the State Groom Squad Contest Coordinator and the respective state staff including the State Fair Manager or county 4-H staff to determine if attire is inappropriate.

BASIS OF JUDGING

Scores are tabulated by combining scores achieved in the following six areas:

1. GROOMING: 10 points possible
Points awarded on the method demonstrated to clean and “slick off” the horse for show. Team should use tools correctly, and in the correct order.
Refer to the [4-H Horse Project Guide](#) (pp 69-70) for additional grooming procedure information.
 - a. Curry combs – Use in a circular motion to lift dirt, flicking motion to remove dirt. Never use on ears, or on legs below knees or hocks, or on mane and tail.
 - b. Hard brushes and Soft brushes – Use short, brisk, flipping motion to remove dirt.
 - c. Mane and tail comb or brush – Start brushing at bottom of hair and work up toward roots; never start at the top.
 - d. Hoof pick – always work heel to toe
 - e. Cloth – For use on head and finishing touches on coat.
 - f. Hands – Use for adding bloom to coat and removing excess hair.
2. TEAMWORK: 15 points possible
Based on organization, equal participation, and completion of all grooming steps/tasks within the allotted time.
 - a. Teams should be well organized. Each team member should have their own task.
 - b. Each team member should have space to work. Never cluster around one area.
 - c. Team members should be pleasant to each other.
 - d. Teams should not talk with friends, parents, audience, or other teams. Excessive talking within a team may be marked down.

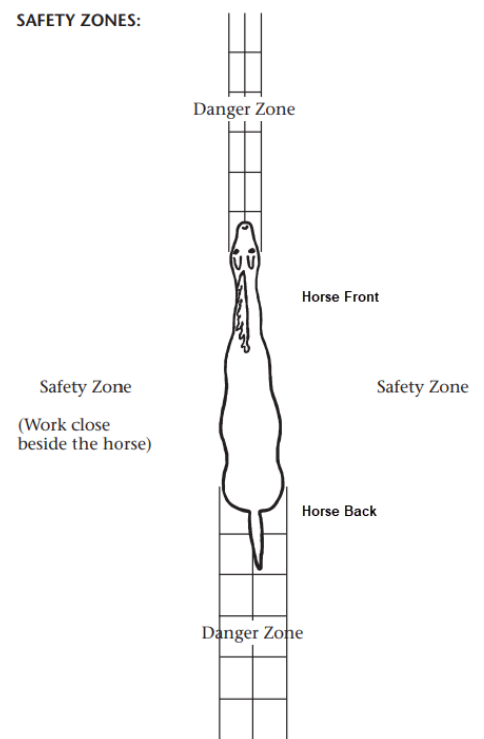
3. EQUIPMENT: 5 points possible

- Each team should have at least the minimum equipment suggested. No limit is placed on the amount of equipment allowed but extra equipment will not necessarily receive more points.
- All equipment should be clean and in good useable condition.
- Teams may not borrow from or loan equipment to other teams.
- Prior to the contest, a judge will check all equipment.
- All equipment points (-5) will be deducted if illegal equipment is found.

4. SAFETY: 35 points possible

Points awarded for properly following the rules of safety for working around a horse.

- All members of the team must wear boots.
- Never stand or work in the "Danger Zone" which is directly in front and directly behind the horse (see Safety Zones diagram).
- All team members will work on the same side of the horse.
- Never kneel or sit near the horse. When grooming legs, squat down so you can move quickly away if the horse moves. Never have all team members squatting at the same time.
- When crossing behind a horse, either cross out of range of hind legs or pass close with a hand on the horse.
- Never cross under the lead rope between handler and horse.
- Work quietly. Any abuse or harsh treatment of the horse will result in disqualification.



5. WRITTEN QUIZ: 20 points possible

- 20 minutes are allowed for the selected team member to complete the written quiz.
- Questions will be multiple choice and true/false.
- Resources used for questions are listed on the [WSU 4-H Equine website](#) under Contest Resources: [WA State 4-H Equine Contest Approved Source List](#).

6. SHOWMANSHIP: 15 points possible

- One team member will exhibit the horse in a 4-H showmanship class following the rules of the [Washington 4-H Equine Program Rulebook](#), which includes personal appearance and ability demonstrated in presenting the horse. Showmanship attire is expected.

AWARDS

Awards are based on the Danish system of judging which is evaluated against a standard and scoring system as outlined in these groom squad contest rules.

The recommended breakdown is as follows:

- Blue Danish: 86 to 100 points
- Red Danish: 70 to 85 points
- White Danish: 69 points and below

Refer to [Description of the Group \(or Danish\) System of Judging](#) for additional information.

Awards at State Fair are determined by State Fair. For example, Champion and Reserve Champion may be given to blue ribbon teams at the discretion of the judge and/or the parameters of the State Fair contest.

It is suggested that each team member receives ribbons earned by the team.

COUNTY CONTESTS

County contests are encouraged to observe state contest rules and procedures with the following considerations:

1. Members may be Juniors, Intermediates, or Seniors.
2. Members must be currently enrolled in 4-H Online.
3. It is recommended that the team be composed of three 4-H members of the same age division (junior, intermediate, or senior). However, while not encouraged, mixed age teams at the county level are allowed. A mixed team will compete as the oldest age division represented on the team. For example, if it is a mixed team of junior, intermediate, and senior, the team will compete as a senior team.

Note: Only teams of three senior members can qualify for the State Contest.

4. Safety and age appropriateness are paramount. For example, a junior team may not be tall enough to fully groom a 16-hand horse, yet if that is the horse available, a horse can only be groomed up to the height on its body that the members can safely reach.
5. Members may participate in this event without being entered in other classes of the 4-H Horse Division at their county level horse activities, per county discretion.
6. Horseless horse members are encouraged to participate.
7. Horses are selected by the process the county deems appropriate but must be sound and safe to handle.
8. The facility at which the event is hosted should be large enough to accommodate multiple teams with adequate space between them for safety, including ample space for grooming equipment and enough space to facilitate the showmanship portion of the contest. Horses being groomed should not be tied. One of the team members should be holding the horse.
9. The judge for a county groom squad contest should be knowledgeable about the Washington State 4-H Equine Program and familiar with Washington State 4-H equine publications. The judge(s) may either be an official judge, a volunteer, 4-H alumni, or 4-H supporter. The judge(s) should not be a parent or family member of any of the team members they are judging.

Does this mean we don't need an official judge for showmanship as well?

Things to consider adding to our county expectations.

Senior Teams/Eligibility for State

1. Teams with all seniors can choose to compete at the senior level where they have a post or as an all senior team where they hold the horses themselves. Only the all senior designated teams who hold the horse themselves are eligible for state.
2. All senior teams at fair- whole team must be willing and able to go to state (can't substitute members for state); otherwise, they compete as a regular senior team at fair.
3. To be eligible for state, all 3 members must have competed together at one of the pre-fair groom squad contests as an all-senior team holding the horse.

Miscellaneous add ons

1. Teams will use a horse unknown to them during the contest.
2. It is encouraged for members to rotate positions at contests so all members get experience; at the county fair, strongest members for each job are chosen.
3. Members who are interested in participating but don't have a team may register individually or as a duo; best efforts will be made to make teams of like age divisions.
4. Showmanship patterns will be used from all regular levels. Each squad will do the same pattern.
5. There will be three different exams- junior, intermediate and senior. Exams will be given based on the level that the team is competing, not the level of the test taker.

Publication History

Original material prepared by Dr. Joe Johnson, WSU Equine Specialist; adapted by Dolly Barquist and Sandi Glanz; Betsy Greene, WSU Equine Specialist; Pat Hague, 4-H Volunteer/State Fair Superintendent; Jerry Newman, 4-H State Animal Science Specialist; Muriel Timboe, WSU Extension, April 1997. Revised in 2004 by the WA State 4-H Equine Committee and Jerry Newman. Approved by the State 4-H Fair Board in 2004 as a State Fair No. 61 (WA4HF3.66h) publication Published August 2008. C1114E.

Review Notes

Updated by Jennifer Leach, 4-H Equine Specialist and Laura Shackley, State Fair Groom Squad Coordinator, 2024 to reflect both county and state fair. Used at 2024 State Groom Squad Contest. Reviewed by State Contest Committee on September 24, 2024. Reviewed and Approved by the State Equine Committee on November 26, 2024. These rules will no longer be listed as C1114E after this final review.

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