



## Maryland 4-H State Horse Judging Contest Procedures & Regulations

### Objectives of the Horse Judging Contest

The primary objective of the Maryland 4-H Horse Judging Contest is to provide an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate their knowledge of equine-related subject matter in a competitive setting where attitudes of friendliness and fairness prevail. These contests should provide an educational experience for both participants and spectators.

### General

1. Contest date and time: Saturday, June 13, 2026 at the Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd, West Friendship MD 21794.
2. This is a contest in which teams and individuals compete. There will be a \$7.00 entry fee for each contestant.
3. Schedule

Saturday June 13, 2026: Howard County Fairgrounds	
8:00-8:30 am	Contest Check-in – Horse Judging & Hippology
8:45 am	Welcome and Contest Overview
9:00-9:45 am	Examination Phase of Hippology Contest
10:00 am	Horse Judging Contest / Judging Phase of Hippology
12:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:00 pm	Judging Contest Reasons, followed by Hippology Contest Station Phase
5:00 pm	Awards Ceremony

4. Lunch will NOT be provided for contestants or coaches. All participants and spectators should bring their own lunch, drinks and snacks. A bottle of water and a snack will be provided to contestants during a break within the judging portion of the event.  
**NOTE:** Contestant lunches will be placed in a holding area designated prior to the contest, where they will be made available during the lunch break. Please make sure the lunch container is labeled with the contestant's name. Contestants will not eat lunch with parents and coaches.
5. Each UME County/City Unit may enter a team of four (4) members in each age division (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior). An additional six (6) individual entries may be entered in each of the following divisions: Junior, Intermediate, Intermediate Novice, Senior, and Senior Novice. There will be no Novice Team entries.
6. Only registered 4-H members may participate in the contest. Individuals participating in the statewide contest must be enrolled as a Maryland 4-H member for 2026 in 4-H Online by June 1, 2026. All contest participants must be registered for the event in 4-H Online by June 1, 2026. 4-H members not registered by the deadline will not be allowed to participate in the contest.
7. Contestants must request accommodation for participation in advance when they register for the contest. Contestants requesting accommodation will be contacted by a Contest Manager to discuss reasonable accommodation. Accommodation requests cannot be accepted or modified on the day of the contest.



8. Statewide competition will be governed by the prescribed procedures and regulations. Additional rules may be promulgated for specific purposes. Contestants not complying with the rules will be disqualified. Coaches and/or spectators not complying with the applicable Procedures and Regulations will be dismissed from the contest area.
9. Teams and Individuals
  - a. Substitutions: A team member may only be substituted if not present the day of the contest. The substitute will be one of the contestants registered as an Individual competitor. Substitutions for individual entries and alternates are not allowed.
  - b. The score of the three highest placing team members will determine the team score in the respective age division.
  - c. All contestants (team and individual) will be eligible for the individual awards.

#### Contestants & Eligibility

1. All Contestants must be enrolled in 4-H online by the contest entry deadline and approved by the 4-H Extension Educator of their respective UME unit.
2. Maryland 4-H members must be between the ages of 8 - 18 as of January 1 of the current year. Juniors are ages 8 - 10; Intermediates are ages 11 - 13; and Seniors are ages 14 - 18.
3. The Novice division is only open to Intermediate and Senior age 4-Hers who have never competed in the state 4-H Horse Judging Contest.
4. Contestants must not have previously competed in a Horse Judging contest at the All-American Quarter Horse Congress, Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup (Louisville, Kentucky) or Western National 4-H Horse Roundup.
5. Senior contestants receiving college or vocational training beyond high school in areas relative to horse judging may not compete in the Maryland 4-H Horse Judging Contest.
6. **Attire:** Contestants are strongly discouraged from changing attire between the judging and reasons portions of the contest. Recommended judging attire should consist of slacks or jeans, shirt with a collar and a lightweight jacket or vest if needed due to weather conditions. **Hard-soled, closed-toed boots or shoes are required for safety.** Articles of clothing that identify the contestant's 4-H county/city may not be worn. Contestants should be prepared to be outdoors in potentially inclement weather.

#### Liability Release and Informed Consent

Participation in this event requires the 4-H member and his/her parent/guardian to agree to the terms and conditions of the Maryland 4-H Event Liability Release and Informed Consent Agreement. The agreement will be signed electronically when the contestant registers for the event in 4-H Online.

#### Judges

1. Official judges shall place the class while the contestants are judging, make the official placing, indicate the cuts to be made, and file the official card with the Contest Supt.
2. When the contestant has concluded their reasons and answered any questions, the judge will write their reason score on the contestants placing card and turn it in for tabulation.
3. Official judges' placings are final.

#### Contest Procedures

1. Four to six halter classes will be judged. Breeds represented in the halter classes may include **but are not limited to:** Stock horse breeds, Gaited breeds, Draft breeds, Sport horse breeds, Pony breeds, etc. All halter classes will be judged as sound of limb, eye, wind and mouth.



2. Four to six performance classes will be judged. Performance classes may include **but are not limited to:** Western Pleasure, English Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Hunter Hack, Western Riding, Reining, Plantation English Pleasure Walking Horse, Saddlebred Three- Gaited, and Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat Equitation, Pleasure Driving, or Combined Driving. Performance horses will be judged as seen (Unsoundness to be penalized accordingly). All tack and attire is considered legal.
3. Contestants will be allowed twelve (12) minutes to judge non-reasons classes and fifteen (15) minutes to judge reasons classes
4. Horses will be designated 1, 2, 3, and 4 at the start of each class.
5. Contestants will not be allowed to handle horses at any time, but they will be given an opportunity for close inspection and to observe the horses at a walk and trot. Contestants must conduct themselves according to proper horse safety practices at all times.
6. **Contestants shall not talk among themselves or with people other than officials during the contest. No cell phones or electronic devices are permitted during any phase of the contest.** Contestants will be under the direct supervision of a group leader during the event.
7. All contestants may use a clipboard and/or notepad. Contestants are permitted to have notes and other horse judging information during the judging phase and while preparing oral reasons.
8. A lunch break will be provided to contestants prior to giving reasons.
9. Oral Reasons:
  - a. Each presentation should be 1-2 minutes in length.
  - b. Use of notes while giving reasons will result in a penalty and reduce your score.
  - c. **Juniors** will present **one set** of oral reasons (one halter class) and will judge all classes.
  - d. **Intermediates** will present **two sets** of oral reasons (one halter, one performance class).
  - e. **Intermediate Novices** will present **one set** of oral reasons (one halter class)
  - f. **Seniors** will present **four sets** of oral reasons (usually either two halter and two performance classes or three halter classes and one performance class).
  - g. **Senior Novices** will present **two sets** of oral reasons (one halter, one performance class)
10. An official placing of the classes and an awards ceremony will take place shortly after the completion of the contest.

### Scoring

1. Scores for placing, reasons, and the breaking of ties were taken from the Eastern Nationals 4-H Horse Roundup Horse Judging SOP.
2. Fifty (50) points shall constitute a perfect score on placing a class and fifty (50) points shall constitute a perfect score on reasons.
3. **Individual** overall ties will be broken in the following order:
  - a. Highest overall reasons score, if still tied; then,
  - b. Lowest placing in reasons classes, if still tied; then,
  - c. Highest placing score for all non-reason classes, if still tied; then,
  - d. Highest reasons score in performance division, if still tied then...
  - e. Lowest placing in performance reasons classes.
4. **Individual** ties for halter classes will be broken in the following order:
  - a. Highest reasons score in halter division
  - b. Lowest placing scores for halter reasons classes
  - c. Highest performance total score
  - d. Highest reasons score in performance division
  - e. Lowest placing scores for performance reasons classes



5. **Individual** ties for performance classes will be broken in the following order:
  - a. Highest reasons score in performance division
  - b. Lowest placing scores for performance reasons classes
  - c. Highest halter total score
  - d. Highest reasons score in halter division
  - e. Lowest placing scores for halter reasons classes
6. **Individual** ties for reasons will be broken in the following order:
  - a. Lowest placing in all reasons classes
  - b. Highest placing score for all non-reasons classes
  - c. Highest reasons score in performance division
  - d. Lowest placing in performance reasons classes
7. **Team scores** overall will be calculated by dropping the team member with the lowest score overall.
8. **Team** overall ties will be broken in the following order:
  - a. Highest overall reasons scores
  - b. Lowest placing in reasons classes
  - c. Highest placing score for all non-reasons classes
  - d. Highest reasons score in performance division
  - e. Lowest placing in performance reasons classes

### Awards

1. Team and Individual awards for will be presented in all age divisions.
2. The top 10 individual seniors at the Maryland 4-H State Horse Judging Contest will be invited to participate in the process led by the state Horse Judging coach to select the State 4-H Horse Judging Team. Contestants in the Senior Novice division are not eligible. More information about the selection process will be provided to 4-H members who are eligible to try out for the State 4-H Horse Judging Team based on their placing in the State Contest.

**NOTE: The selection of a State 4-H Horse Judging Team and the Team's participation in the National 4-H Horse Judging Contest at the Eastern National 4-H Horse Round- Up are contingent upon the event being held and applicable UME travel guidelines.**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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