

# RANCH HORSE RIDING



*Prepared By the*  
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# RANCH HORSE RIDING CLASSES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the ranch riding class is to measure the ability of the horse to be a pleasure to ride while being used as a means of conveyance from performing one ranch task to another. The horse should reflect the versatility, attitude and movement of a working ranch horse riding outside the confines of an arena. The horse should be well-trained, relaxed, quiet, soft and cadenced at all gaits. The ideal ranch horse will travel with forward movement and demonstrate an obvious lengthening of stride at extended gaits. The horse can be ridden with light contact or on a relatively loose rein without requiring undue restraint, but not shown on a full drape of reins. The overall manners and responsiveness of the ranch riding horse to make timely transitions in a smooth and correct manner, as well as the quality of the movement are of primary considerations. The ideal ranch riding horse should have a natural head carriage at each gait.

## APPOINTMENTS

For rules regarding correct Western appointments, refer to AR144.

## CONDUCT

1. Each horse will work individually, performing both required and optional maneuvers. Horses will be scored on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each maneuver will receive a score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each maneuver will be scored on the following basis, ranging from plus 1 1/2 to minus 1 1/2: -1 1/2 extremely poor, -1 very poor, -1/2 poor, 0 correct, +1/2 good, +1 very good, +1 1/2 excellent. Maneuver scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points.
2. The required maneuvers will include the walk, trot, and lope both directions; and the extended trot and extended lope at least one direction; as well as stops, and back.
3. Three optional maneuvers may include a side pass, turns of 360 degrees or more, change of lead (simple or flying), walk, jog, or lope over a pole(s); or some combination of maneuvers that would be reasonable for a ranch horse to perform.
4. The maneuvers may be arranged in various combinations with final approval by the judge.
5. The overall cadence and performance of the gaits should be free-flowing and ground covering at all gaits, with an emphasis on forward movement. Transitions should be performed where designated, with smoothness and responsiveness.
6. No time limit.
7. One of the suggested patterns may be used (from the current AQHA Handbook and found on AHA website); however, a judge may utilize a different pattern as long as all required maneuvers and the three (or more) optional maneuvers are included. Should a judge use one of his/her own patterns it is recommended to not have the stop following an extended lope.
8. The use of natural logs is encouraged.
9. Posting at the extended jog is acceptable.
10. Touching or holding the saddle horn is acceptable.
11. Hoof polish is discouraged.
12. It is customary to not remove the hair from the insides of the ears, but horses with clean clipped ears will not be penalized.
13. Trimming of the bridle path, fetlocks or excessive (long) facial hair is allowed.
14. Appointments will silver should not count over a good working outfit. Silver on bridles and saddles and the use of weighted reins is discouraged.

## PENALTIES

A contestant shall be penalized each time the following occur:

1. ONE (1) POINT PENALTIES
  - a. Too slow/per gait
  - b. Over-bridled
  - c. Out of frame
  - d. Break of gait at walk or jog for 2 strides or less
2. THREE (3) POINT PENALTIES
  - a. Break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides
  - b. Break of gait at lope
  - c. Wrong lead or out of lead
  - d. Draped reins
3. FIVE (5) POINT PENALTIES
  - a. Blatant disobedience (kick, bite, buck, rear, etc.)
4. TEN (10) point penalties
  - a. Eliminates **or adds a** maneuver *(Effective 2/1/19)*
  - b. Incomplete maneuver
  - c. **Off pattern** *(Effective 2/1/19)*
5. ZERO SCORE
  - a. Willful abuse
  - b. Major disobedience or schooling
  - c. Illegal use of fingers or hands on reins
6. No specific penalties will be incurred for nicks/hits on logs/poles but deduction may be made in maneuver score
7. No specific penalties will be incurred for over/under spins but deduction may be made in maneuver score.

## Patterns

AHA website. <https://www.arabianhorses.org/additional/judges-stewards/resources/>

- Judges can develop their own patterns but they must include the required maneuvers, all required gaits, and three option maneuvers.
- Ask the USEF/EC Steward to review patterns before they are posted.

## Score Sheet

- AHA website. <https://www.arabianhorses.org/additional/judges-stewards/resources/>

## AHA Ranch Riding Guidelines

**General thoughts** – When judging Ranch Riding, as with other Working Western disciplines, a judge should error on the side of the exhibitor when questionable circumstances arise. It is the judge's responsibility to record what happens, including penalties, and objectively evaluate how well each maneuver was performed.

**Wrong Pattern** (zero score) – A performance of the wrong pattern by a horse/rider should result in a “zero score” for excessive schooling. The rider chooses to perform the maneuvers differently than prescribed.

**Eliminates or Adds** (*Effective 2/1/19*) **a Maneuver** (10 pt. penalty) – Can include but not limited to:

- Rider forgets to back up
- Excessively backing when not specified in the pattern
- Rider turns the wrong direction
- Rider adds extra turns (turns 2 times when pattern indicates a single 360-degree turn)
- Rider/horse never performs a specified gait/maneuver
- Rider/horse **makes no attempt** to show change in rate from normal to extended or from extended to normal gait. (little to no difference in extended vs normal gaits may be better scored as: Penalty 1 – to slow and -1 ½ for an extremely poor maneuver)

**Incomplete Maneuver** (10 pt. penalty) – Can include but not limited to:

- Horse starts over the poles, refuses and must go around
- Horse refuses to go over poles and must go around

**Off Pattern** (10 pt. penalty) (*Effective 2/1/19*) – Can include but not limited to:

- Rider/horse goes on the wrong side of the poles/obstacle than pattern layout indicates when performing a maneuver.
- Rider performs maneuvers out of order ie: stops, backs and then turns when the pattern indicates stop, turn, back.

### **Other Circumstances**

- Rider attempts a lead change and is unsuccessful - result would be -1 ½ for the lead change maneuver followed by penalty 3 and -1 ½ for the wrong lead in the subsequent lope maneuver. (Rider makes no attempt/forgets to change lead – penalty 10)

**NOTE:** *This class is Ranch Horse Riding and horses should NOT perform or be rewarded for performing gaits as they do in Western Pleasure. The horses are to be presented in a more forward-moving style than the typical Western Pleasure Horse.*

*"The horse and rider will be scored on movement, which is **cadence and rhythm of gaits**, smoothness and consistency in performance, along with how they perform the optional maneuvers. Then the score sheets will be posted for the exhibitors' benefit."*