



The 4-H Horse Show - The Showperson

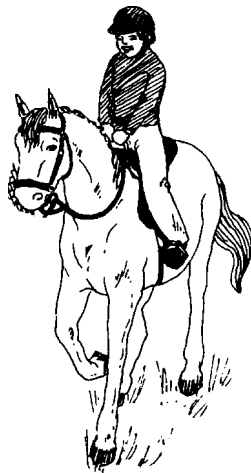
Barbara Annis, 4-H Volunteer, Sally Barney, Extension Specialist



How do you prepare to be a participant in a 4-H show? This is a good question, for both the rider and the horse must be physically and mentally prepared for horse show competition. Not everyone who enjoys riding enjoys competitive horse shows, but good preparation will increase your chances of having a positive experience and much enjoyment.

Preparation Starts

Months Ahead: Begin early preparing yourself and your horse for horse show participation. Does your horse load into a trailer easily? If not, start now working on this problem; it's easier to solve the problem now and avoid frustration on show day.



Is your horse conditioned properly for the show ring. Flabby muscles and a winded horse don't make points with a judge. Start now developing the muscles and stamina of both yourself and your horse. Remember, you and your horse are both athletes and athletes prepare for competition.

Exercise regularly to firm up horse and human muscles. Work on problems until you have them corrected.

Problems that require work might include:

- loading into the trailer
- wrong leads
- approaching trail obstacles
- backing straight and smooth
- standing quietly while saddled
- moving easily in fitting and showmanship

If you have never been to a 4-H show, you might want to attend a show without your horse to see how shows are run and what might be expected of you if you were riding. You might volunteer to help out at a 4-H horse show; volunteers gain valuable horse show experience.

Preparing the horse in the weeks before the show: Show horses are prepared well in advance for competition. Some things that might be done prior to show day include:

- leg clipping - clip the hair on the horse's legs several weeks before the show in case you make a mistake.
- check shoes - if your horses shoes are worn out or if the toes are long, you might want to call the farrier.

- final clipping - the day before the show you can clip your horse's ears, nostrils, under the jaw, bridle path, etc.

- bathing - when bathing, wet your horse, soap him up, scrub, and rinse. Do this as many times as necessary to get him clean. When rinsing get all of the soap out, any soap that is left can cause the horse to itch and then to scratch. Don't forget to wash the sheath if you have a gelding and the genital area if you have a mare.

- braiding - braiding or banding can be done the night before. Use thread for a neater, tighter braid.

Preparing your equipment in the weeks before the show: You should prepare all of your equipment for a show just as you prepare your horse. Preparing your tack is important. Consider the following steps:

- Cleaning - take your tack apart so you can clean it thoroughly. Soak and clean the bit and your stirrup irons if appropriate. Check the leather at this time for any worn or weak spots. Clean all pieces of tack including the underside of your saddle. A toothbrush is a great tool to use when cleaning stitching and tooled leather. Reassemble your tack remembering to put all keepers back into their proper places. Polish all metal parts.

- Storing your tack - clean tack will stay cleaner if you cover it. An old pillow case or cloth bag is great for bridles.

Other equipment needs to be prepared as well. This includes your clothes. You should consider:

- Show clothes - your show clothes should be clean and pressed and put into a garment bag. Remember your accessories

such as gloves, scarves, pins, etc. Clean your boots and place them in a boot bag or pillow case.

- Tack box and other equipment - check out all of the miscellaneous equipment you will need such as halter, lead ropes, hay bag, water bucket, blanket or cooler, etc. See that the equipment is clean and in good repair.

- Trailer and tow vehicle - do a safety check of the trailer and tow vehicle several days prior to the show. Correct any problems now to avoid breaking down on the road.

- 4-H paperwork - put your 4-H approval form, lease form if you have one, rabies certificate, coggins test or health check results, if required, in a convenient carrying pouch. Have this pouch with you on show day.



Making lists: Most 4-H families put together a 4-H horse show checklist. On the list are all the items the 4-H member will need to take to the show; everything from approval forms to water buckets go on the list, tack and clothes too!

As the items on the list are packed in the vehicle for the show, check the item off the list. At the end of the show, the list can be used again when you are packing to head home to prevent you from leaving items behind. Put your name on your personal belongings and equipment to help you keep track of your things.

On show day: This is the day you have been preparing for; good luck. If you have truly prepared you should have a wonderful, fun, and relaxing day.

When you arrive, park in the requested location, secure your horse, and check in with the show secretary. Once you have checked in you can return to your horse and prepare for your scheduled classes.

Remember to follow good rules of safety:

√ Don't leave your horse unattended.

√ Tie the hay net up high enough so when it's empty, the horse won't get caught up in it.

√ Tie your halter with a quick release or safety knot.

√ Provide water and shade for your horse.

√ If you leave the saddle on the horse loosen the girth, but not enough so it could slip sideways. Never tie your horse by the reins of the bridle.

Practice good sportsmanship: Good sportsmanship is appreciated by everyone. Practice good sportsmanship at every 4-H event including the 4-H horse show.

√ Congratulate those who do well

√ Don't complain; use this as an opportunity to learn from your mistakes. Be honest in your personal evaluation of your performance.

√ Watch others, use this as an opportunity to learn from others who are doing things well both in and outside of the show ring.

√ Don't blame the judge for giving you their honest opinion of your performance. Every time you enter a show you are asking the judge for their opinion.

√ Don't gloat when you win. Enjoy the honor, but remember everyone in the ring was trying their very best. Remember too, you won't win every time.

√ At the end of the day take time to thank those persons who make it possible for you to participate: your family, 4-H leaders, show staff, friends and neighbors.

GLOSSARY:

Farrier - One who shoes animals and takes care of their feet.

"Helping You Put Knowledge and Research To Work."

UNH Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding age, color, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.